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(FOR ALL THE HELP AND INFORMATION YOU MAY NEED)

A.) SERVICES ON SUNDAYS

I) Adult Service

- i. 7:00 a.m.: Holy Communion
- ii. 10:00 a.m.: Second Service
- iii. 6:00 p.m.: Evening Service
- iv. House Fellowship

II) Youth Service

- i. 7:00 a.m.: Holy Communion
- ii. 10:00 a.m.: Second Service.
(Please note that youths worship at the main church every fifth Sunday.)

III) Children (Sunday School) Service

- i. 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. services.
(Please note that children worship with adults every last Sunday of the month.)

B.) OTHER DAILY ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMMES

MONDAYS

- i. 7:00 a.m.: Holy Communion Service
- ii. 6:30 p.m.: Choir Practice

TUESDAYS

- i. 7:00 a.m.: Holy Communion Service
- ii. 5:00 p.m.: Bible Study Preview
- iii. 6:00 p.m.: Bible Study (Gathering of the Nobles)

WEDNESDAYS

- i. 7:00 a.m.: Holy Communion Service
6:00 p.m.: Prayer Meeting
(Hour of Divine Settlement)

THURSDAYS

- i. 7:00 a.m.: Holy Communion Service

FRIDAYS

- i. 7:00 a.m.: Holy Communion Service
- ii. 6:30 p.m.: Choir Practice
- iii. 11:00 p.m.: Weekly vigil via zoom.
(Meeting ID - 82326080737, Passcode - VIGIL).

SATURDAYS

- i. 7:00 a.m.: Holy Communion Service.

- ii. Strictly Feminine: Every 3rd Saturday of the month by 1:00 p.m. at the Youth Chapel
- iii. Just for Guys: Every 1st Saturday of the month by 1:00 p.m. at the Youth Chapel
- iv. Youth Fellowship: Every Saturday by 3:00 p.m. at the Youth Chapel

MORE VITAL INFORMATION

1) BREAST FEEDING SUITE:

This opens near the church from 6:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Sundays to enable nursing mothers remain baby-friendly within the confines of the church during services.

2) BANK DETAILS:

- i. AVMCC Development Fund – UBA - 1021733207
- ii. Evangelical Fund - Access Bank – 0017948337
- iii. Offering and Thanksgiving —
Wema Bank – 0120970667/ GTB - 0570015856
- iv. Harvest - First Bank – 2025018178
- v. Project Support - First Bank – 2001350641
- vi. First Fruits - Stanbic IBTC – 9200212515
- vii. Tithes - GTB – 0007899440
- viii. Building Fund - ECO Bank – 0953002198
- ix. Covenant Seed – Zenith – 1011097083
- x. Endowment Fund - Wema – 0122245798

3) LIBRARY:

The Cathedral Library opens Mondays to Fridays from 8:00am to 5:00pm.

4) VINING BOOKSHOP:

Vining Bookshop located at the Adetiloye House opens Tuesdays to Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Saturdays, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; and Sundays, from 9:30a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

5) MINISTRIES AND FELLOWSHIPS:

- i. Children's Ministry - 08033163337
- ii. Counselling Ministry - If you need somebody to counsel you, please call: 08037605902, available 24 hours.
- iii. Elderly Ministry - All Senior Citizens are welcome every first Tuesday of the month from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- iv. Evangelical Ministry - Meets on the first and third Mondays of every month at the 1st floor, Vining House by 6:00pm and on the third Saturday, monthly.
- v. Prisons and Hospital Ministry – Meets second Sunday of the month after the 10:00 a.m. service at the Church gallery. (08033136370, 08036695837).
- vi. Intercessory Ministry - Meets every Tuesday from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. (08037227105)
- vii. Men and Women of Grace Fellowship -Fellowship for the widows and widowers holds every last Thursday of the month at 11:00 a.m. (08023125243)

- viii. Christian Mothers - All women prayer meeting holds every first Thursday of the month at the AVMCC main sanctuary from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Bible Study holds every first Monday of the month by 5:00 p.m. Fasting and Prayers every last Monday of the Month at 5:00 p.m.
- ix. Publications Committee – This is the organ of the church assigned with the responsibility of publishing the Christian Outlook, a periodic magazine devoted to evangelism. Journalists and persons with flare for writing are enjoined to join the committee.

6) LIST OF CENTRES FOR HOME (CELL) FELLOWSHIP:

- i. Mr. Cyril Nwannunu – Egbeda – 08033480112
- ii. Mrs. Georgina Bamigboye - Oko-Oba
GRA – 08023414415
- iii. Obum Osy-Onyekwelu – Maryland – 08036684298
- iv. Victor Adenuoye – Fagba – 08069206291
- v. Lady Gina Okolo – Mangoro, Ikeja – 08033235796
- vi. Ugochi Osinigwe - College Road, Ogba – 08092147012
- vii. Rtd. Col .C. O. Ajala - New Ipaja Road – 08081654907
- viii. Mrs. Ebele S. Okere - Ajao Estate – 08023270247
- ix. Chukwuemeka Ejiofor – Dopemu – 07030463556
- x. Adekoya M.O - Toyin Street, Ikeja –
- xi. Olusunkanmi King – Maryland –
- xii. Chinyere Umealo – Oregun – 08033052131
- xiii. Ada Obi – Cement – 08062074465
- xiv. Obi Divine – Cement – 08062074465
- xv. Mrs. Udoka Omoniyi – Fagba – 08023082792
- xvi. Mayokun Ogedengbe – Anifowose – 08069530744
- xvii. Gbadeyan Ademola - Alagbole/Akute – 08171373722
- xviii. Chinyere Okpara – Adealu – 08035792201
- xix. Umeadi Juliana – Dopemu – 08057474558
- xx. Bro. I. O. Odeniran – Opebi – 08023096565
- xxi. Umeadi Christopher - Dopemu Road – 08055901853
- xxii. Tochi Anyalewechi - Oke-Ira,Ogba –
- xxiii. Mrs Teju Akindolire - Ogudu, GRA – 08175160830
- xxiv. Mr Tunji Odeneye – Gbagada – 08033163337
- xxv. Mr Makinde Ogunleye - Omole Phase 2 – 08033078004
- xxvi. Barr. F.Okey Ogbu - Iyana-Ipaja – 08023192145
- xxvii. Princewill Ihemerendu - Mafoluku –

7) CATHEDRAL PRIESTS

- i. The Dean, The Ven. Ebenezer Adewole – 08062766051
- ii. The Ven. Abiodun Omoyelu – 08062230010
- iii. The Ven. Azubike Ahubelem – 08033081617
- iv. The Ven. Dr. Benjamin Chijioke Okere - 08023270247

- v. The Rev. Toyin Adeyeye – 08065088064
- vi. The Rev. Yinka Akinpeju – 08024060758
- vii. The Rev. Michael Obembe – 08138137140
- viii. The Rev. Adefope Adetujoye – 08035552146
- ix. The Rev. Oluwatomide Oso – 08166588257
- x. The Rev. Olufikayomi Adenle – 07087180407

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Editor-In-Chief Desk

We are inspired

As this edition of the Christian Outlook is coming out, the reality of the new cathedral is dawning on us. We are witnessing a new beginning for which this generation would be blessed by generations down the centuries. The cathedral project, which is signposting the 60th anniversary of the Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC), is taking on a life of its own. The sceptics are confounded. The builders could see the hand of God. The psalmist says: “Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders are working in vain!”

We are building. The Lord is building His House! This edition is to record for posterity the labour of this generation in rebuilding the Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral. It is an exciting assignment and it forms a central theme of this edition.

We thank God that He is helping us to fulfil the dream of our leaders during this era of our father, James Olusola Odedeji, the Lord Bishop of the Diocese of Lagos West in the Church of Nigeria. This edition is providing insight into the activities of the Nehemiah Generation building the new citadel. That was also the theme of the last Synod Report given by the Lord Bishop. He has explained why it is necessary for us to improve the church finances so that the new Cathedral can be ready by Easter of 2025. He said: “We are working on schedule and with God on our side, our destination is assured.”

This edition is a bumper package that would inspire the reader to aspire to greater height. In short 60 years, this church has transformed from a small parish into a giant cathedral of global reckoning. This is the testimony in the great compendium, Chronicles, which was presented to mark the 60th anniversary of our church. This full report of the impressive presentation is written in this edition.

We also have a comprehensive report on the new officers of the Cathedral elected at the last Synod. We know from this report that our church is in capable hands.

This is a rich edition in which we have a lot of inspiring and educative materials that would guide us in our Christian journey. Our new verger elucidates on his journey that transformed him from being a Muslim to becoming a devoted servant of the Lord. Our brother, Seyi Osunkeye, explains why Harvest 2024 would be the best in the church history. We have the inspiring story of Mrs Awokoya, our retiring children choir mistress, who promised to continue to support the choir despite the change of baton.

This edition is enriched by the contributions of our regulars, including our brother, Olumide Ajomale, whose write-up on page 39 would give you greater impetus to perform better as a Christian. Our father, the Right Rev. Professor Asaju, puts a Christian perspective on the unending Arab-Israeli conflict.

This edition reaffirms the competence of the editorial team under the leadership of Godwin Ofulue. The team is made up of volunteers, who have realized that service in the Lord's Vineyard is the ultimate vocation. We are proud of this lean and effective team.

In 40 years, time, when the church would be marking its centenary, the chronicles of this era as provided by this great team would provide a proper insight into this epoch. This team, from the era of Chief Henry Odukomaiya to that of Mr Dapo Ajayi, has meticulously recorded the contemporary history of this church and its role and position within the larger Anglican world. We are inspired by the intrepid consistency of this editorial team and the unflagging morale of each member has continued to inspire us.

Congratulations!

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Starter

Rwanda Primate, Laurent Mbanda, visits Odedeji

By GODWIN OFULUE and AUSTIN OTOIGHILE

The Primate of the Anglican Church of Rwanda, Chairman of Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) and the Bishop of Gasabo, Dr Laurent Mbanda, paid a visit to the Bishop of Lagos West Diocese, Dr James Olusola Odedeji, on Thursday, July 25, 2024 at the Bishop's Court, GRA Ikeja Lagos. His wife, Mrs Chantal Mbanda, and seven Bishops from Rwanda accompanied the Primate.

Odedeji conducted them round Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC), the official seat of the Diocese, where they were welcomed by the Cathedral Dean, The Venerable Ebenezer Adewole, priests, and parishioners.

The Primate prayed at the new Cathedral site, asking for God's provisions to complete the project in record time.

He also conducted a prayer session at the Cathedral Tent Church, asking for divine blessings on all parishioners, who enter the tent church to praise and pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

A high ranking Media Coordinator for Lagos West Diocese, Mr Tunji Oguntuase, when contacted to give reasons for the Rwanda Primate's visit to Nigeria, said Abuja was in a better position to respond since it was a visit to Nigeria and not necessarily to Lagos West Diocese.

When he was reached, the Communication Officer of Church of Nigeria, Engr Akin Akorede, explained that the Rwanda Primate was in Nigeria with his bishops for a one-week retreat.

He said Lagos West Diocese was one of the dioceses selected for their visit.

Bishop Odedeji, in an interview with Christian Outlook, described the visit by the Rwanda Primate to Lagos West Diocese as impactful and memorable.

He said: "The Rwanda Primate brought his bishops to Nigeria to understudy what we do and to compare notes. Apart from Lagos West, they visited some other selected Dioceses in the Country.

"At the end of visit to Lagos West, the Primate left impressive comments on how impactful and fulfilling their visit to Lagos West was.

"We took out time to take the Primate and his entourage to tourist centres, especially those relating to the advent of Christianity in Abeokuta and Badagry. They also visited Olumo Rock. They paid courtesy visits to the monarchs of the communities visited."

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KNOW YOUR PRIESTS

By FUNMI AZIKE

THE REV. OLUWATOMIDE OSO

(Editor's note: The Rev. Oluwatomide Oso has been in Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC) for about a year now. He was to be introduced in the last edition of Christian Outlook, but the introduction was inadvertently and regrettably missed. The editor takes full responsibility for the omission and sincerely apologises to our dear Father in the Lord.)

Below, The Rev Oso:

Name

I'm Rev. Oluwatomide Adejuwon Oso, an assisting priest and chaplain to the Bishop.

Place of origin

I'm from IbeFUN in Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Family background

My parents are teachers, my dad is retired but my mum is still in service. I have three siblings. I'm the third born and second male child of the family.

Marital status

I'm single

Born into a Christian family?

Yes, by Anglican parents.

Growing up

We were brought up with love, care and knowing that education is the most important thing.

Early memories

My fondest memory was the reading culture in the family. We had to wake up to read from 4 a.m. to 5:30 a.m. before school and we had to do our assignments before any house chores when we got back at night. Education was prioritised so much that my siblings and I were flogged if we didn't come first, second or third in school.

Academic pursuits

My nursery and primary school education were in Lagos. I attended Ikotun Comprehensive College for my secondary education and later went on to The College of Agriculture for tertiary studies.

Priesthood

Aside from a personal conviction since childhood that I was destined to be a priest, I was at The College of Agriculture where I was the fellowship pastor for two years and heard God telling me I was in the wrong place and that wasn't where He wanted me to be.

Seminary

Around the time when I had the revelation of being in the wrong place, my mum informed me that the seminary form was out and asked me to come pick it. I told her I wasn't keen on it at that moment but I remember praying some nights after and God still told me I was in the wrong place. After more prayers, I called her, and then I told her I would get the form. That was how the journey began.

A day after my 19th birthday, I got back home, had an interview with my Vicar who encouraged me and promised to support me. He took me for interview with the archdeacon before we now had the diocesan selection conference exam here in Lagos West. In fact, it was Baba Odedeji that sent me to school.

Parents' reactions?

My mum was very happy as she had always encouraged my journey into the priesthood. Initially, my dad was skeptical about full-time priesthood but now he's at home with the decision.

Other family members and friends' reaction

They don't really have any influence on my decision but they are all in support of the decision as they were mostly present at my priest ordination.

Role model

Our Bishop, The Rt. Rev James Olusola Odedeji. His simplicity, teachings and lifestyle are worthy of emulation and I continue to learn from him.

Abandoned habits

I used to have lots of friends growing up but now that I'm in the priesthood, I have learnt to manage boundaries.

After seminary

There was the selection conference, interview with my vicar, exam and interview at the Idimu Archdeaconry and the few of us that passed were sent to the Diocese to write exams. Those shortlisted were sent to various schools, I was sent to Archbishop Vining College of Theology, Akure. After a month, I came back for Bishop's interview and those that passed was admitted into the seminary. After four years, I got a Bachelor of Theology before being sent to the diocese to serve.

Ordination

First, I was ordained a deacon here in the cathedral on August 23, 2020 by our Lord Bishop, The Rt. Rev James Olusola Odedeji and was ordained a priest July 4, 2021 also at the cathedral by the Lord Bishop as well.

Reaction

I was elated, happy, and excited, as I believed I was finally fulfilling what God wanted for me. However, I remember my dad saying he wasn't going to congratulate me as he believed the priesthood to be like military job but he's going to be praying for God to help and strengthen me.

Last station before AVMCC

Bola Memorial Anglican Church, Ikeja.

Message for AVMCC

We should do well to help others and let our eyes be on the ultimate goal, which is the kingdom of heaven.

From palace to pulpit: The Rev. Oluwafikayomi Adenle

Name

I'm Rev. Oluwafikayomi Aderenle Adetunji.

Origin

I'm from the Adenle Royal Family of Osogbo in Osun State.

Family background

My parents are both retired. My dad is an engineer and my mum worked with the Nigeria Meteorological Agency. I have three siblings, and I'm the first born of the family.

Marital status

I'm married to Mrs Sophia Adenle, she's a microbiologist from the University of Ibadan, where we met.

Faith

Yes, my parents are Anglicans.

Growing up

It was easy especially as my parents were inclined towards Christian activities. My mum is a prayer warrior and my dad loves hymns. Despite growing up in the palace, I participated actively in the choir and Sunday school, which greatly influenced my life.

Academic pursuits

I started at a Catholic school, St. Leo Nursery and Primary school in Osogbo. I then proceeded to the Academy of Success Comprehensive College in Osogbo. I later attended the University of Ibadan in 2010 for a Bachelor's degree in Religious Studies. After my Youth Service in Edo State, I returned for my Master's degree in 2018 and then proceeded to the seminary.

Career path

There really is no confusion about what I call a career path, as ministry is a lot of work. From the time I was in junior secondary school, I prayed to God about His calling for me and had my revelation. I told my parents about it, and they asked me to keep praying about it. Despite my deep conviction, I also conferred with some of my spiritual fathers in the Lord, and they told me to keep praying as well. Understanding my calling early in life helped many of my decisions. For instance, I opted to study religious studies at the university despite having a score that could easily qualify for Law.

Final decision/Conviction

I believe everyone has different ways God relates with them. Before I had the revelation that solidified my conviction about the priesthood, I often observed something in my life that guided me. When I make choices and it's easy, I know God is involved; if I lose my peace over any matter, I know it's not God. When I was praying for God to show me the way regarding the priesthood, I was walking down the street one day and I heard God's message clearly that He needed me in the Anglican Communion. With that specific instruction, I knew God wanted me to serve, especially within the Anglican Communion.

Parents' reactions

I was expecting them to be amazed, but they were surprisingly calm about it. They even mentioned having a premonition of it over the years.

Close family members and friends

My siblings were not surprised because they knew of my involvement in church activities growing up. My other relatives on the other hand, were surprised because, up to that moment, no one had ventured into the ministry in our royal family. I was the first in my family to do that, and it shocked them completely.

Role model

I have a spiritual father, Bro. Pius Paul of Porter's House in Ibadan, whom the Lord directed me to learn under. He has been so instrumental to my growth in the ministry.

Within the Anglican communion, one of my role models is the retired Bishop of Jos, Archbishop Benjamin Argak Kwashi. I love his evangelical drive and selfless service in spite of all the challenges he faced in the ministry.

Abandoned old habits

I used to be a bit of an introvert. Luckily, I had some big sisters within the fellowship in school, who pushed me to engage in more evangelical activities. Later on, serving in the same fellowship at an executive level exposed me to dealing with more people and helped me to conquer stage fright, which is something I also suffered from.

After seminary

After the seminary, which was at Emmanuel College of Theology in Osun State, I had to wait for God's leading and the Archbishops decision, as I was part of the common pool who could be posted to serve anywhere in the south western region.

Hearing whispers that I might be posted back to my diocese in Osun, I was pleasantly surprised to learn I was posted to Lagos West.

Ordination

I was ordained at St. Andrews Anglican Church, Ogudu, in June, 2023 by our Lord Bishop, The Rt. Rev James Olusola Odedeji.

After ordination

I had mixed feelings because I understood the weight of being in the ministry fully. There's little or no room for errors as you are extremely accountable for your words, actions and general conduct.

On the other hand, I was happy because, in my lifetime, I was the first person to be ordained a priest in my family. My parents were elated to have witnessed my ordination in their lifetime.

Station before AVMCC

I served at St. John the Evangelist, Akowonjo.

Message for AVMCC

Firstly, I'm so impressed with the thirst for excellence here at the cathedral. I just want to encourage us to keep serving the Lord and let's continue to be one. As a beacon in the diocese, we should keep setting an example for others to follow and we should live in love.

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9TH SYNOD 1ST SESSION REPORT

We're exploring other viable options in improving church finance — Bishop Odedeji

By OLORUNDA AKINWANDE

The Bishop of Lagos West Anglican Diocese and President of Synod, The Rt. Rev. Dr. James Olusola Odedeji, has reiterated the plan of the diocese to strengthen the investment portfolio of the church in a bid to de-emphasise fund raising targeted at members. This, he said is aimed to continue to position the church for greater heights in the new dispensation and in the face of the current global economic realities.

This was the focus of his charge at the opening of the 1st Session of the 9th Synod of the Diocese of Lagos West. The four-day synod session was held from Thursday, May 16 to Sunday, May 19, 2024. According to the Bishop, one of such steps being taking is the development of the former Bishop's court land valued at two billion naira. The property, he said, would be developed to a 10-floor high rise edifice for commercial purposes without levies or fund raising.

Odedeji appreciated the blessings of God, progress and success of the diocese during the eleven years of his consecration.

Day 1

The synod session opened with Holy Communion service at the Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral at 3:50 p.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2024. The holy Eucharist was consecrated and administered in solemnity that depicted a high level of spirituality.

Opening sermon:

The sermon for the day titled; "Fight the Good Fight of Faith" -1 Timothy 6:12. was preached by the Venerable Ifeanyi Ezenwa. The preacher emphasized that, "It is good" for God to fight for us, rather than us fighting for ourselves. Fighting for ourselves, he said, might be good fight but that it could never be "the good fight".

He quoted Paul's directive to Timothy who he directed to fight the good fight of faith and not just good fight. Timothy 4: 7-8.

Paul, having discovered that the false teachers had infiltrated the church in Ephesus, instructed and guided Timothy on how to lead the church. 1 Timothy 3:14. Paul discovering the challenges and effects on him (Timothy) of the false prophets' infiltration of the church filled with false teachers. 1 Timothy 1: 18-19.

He told Timothy to fight the good fight with conscience in the right way, without compromising his faith and as a fighter and to discern the Spirit to know when things go wrong, even in the house of God. Paul cautioned Timothy never to rely on their wealth that made many of the city dwellers who became wealthy and converted to Christianity but still trusted in their wealth, never to rely on their wealth. Venerable Ezenwa analysed what it means to fight a good fight as: 1. unwavering, unshakable devotion and loyalty to God and enthusiasm to do his work. 2. Marinating and adding unwavering commitment to God. 4. Resilience in the face of hostility both from believers and non-believers. and 5. Refusal to compromise our faith.

How to fight the good fight

1. By the power of the Holy Spirit Ephesians 6: 12.
2. By remaining faithful to God John 14: 6, 15: 4-5.
3. Obedience to God's will John 14:15,
4. Following God's standard. Psalm 1: 11, 119:33, 113.

In conclusion, the preacher remarked that Paul fought the good fight of faith and emerged victorious 2 Timothy 4:7. He said that, to be victorious, the good Christian must accept Christ and must possess the fruit of the spirit.

He must live above reproach, control desires, find joy and contentment in the provision of God and remain steadfast in every trial.

Day 2

The second day Holy Communion service sermon topic was: Denying self for God's service. (Titus 2 11-12) The preacher commenced by saying that grace is one of the most controversial Christianity topics. Some people believe that grace helps to live above sin and others see it as licence for careless living.

The highlights of the sermons were:

- Denying self of the desires of the flesh which will prevent disgrace.
- Whatever Jesus does is not an act but a pattern of the kingdom.
- Discipline and self-denial are keys to function well.
- Whoever will come after Jesus must deny himself.

- God has given the ability to live a self-disciplined life.
- Whoever commits sin willingly allows it.
- Self-denial is the key for giving God quality service.
- Anointing does not guarantee eternity, godly living and good end but self-discipline does.
- Flesh will not cooperate unless one disciplines it.
- The flesh is the worst enemy of man and worst self-discipline is the answer.

What it means to deny self

- Ability to regulate and manage behavior and feelings in a way that befits God and his purposes.
- Training one's mind to agree with God in thought rather than with impulses.

Things to know about self-control

- It is a fruit and not a gift of the Holy Spirit Gal 5:22
- It is by product of our obedience to the Holy Spirit
- It is a painful exercise with eternal gain. Hebrew 12:1

How to fight a good fight over flesh

- Know that the battle of faith is not just a battle against the devil and his agents but a battle between the flesh and the spirit Romans 7:14
- Character is a personal immunity system
- Self-denial is what guarantees a good end and not anointing.

Conclusion

God is not “anyhow God” and He will not accept any act of “anyhow service” from man. Our call is not just a call to service but a call to discipline and orderliness.

Bible Study

The bible study for the day was: Fight the good fight of faith. The sub-theme was: An exposure of counterfeit communications. The text was taken from 1 Timothy 6; 3-10, 1 Timothy 1: 3-6, 1 Timothy 4: 18, Acts 20; 28-32. The Bible teacher was the Venerable. E.B.B Omawaye.

Ven. Omawaye said that the theme of the Synod was extremely opposite to contemporary trend of revisionism, consumerism and commercialisation that confront the Church these days.

He said: “it is a clarion call to genuine believers to enlist in the end time army of God”. The letter was written by Paul the Apostle in AD64-65 after he came out of his first Roman jail.

Ven. Omawaye said that Ephesus, an important city and capital of Asian minor, was rich in commerce and religion with the temple of goddess called Diana where people were gathering from all over the globe to worship. He said that, Ephesus, during the 3rd missionary journey of Paul had good leadership in the body of Christ. The gospel became popular and supernatural miracles took place.

He stated that Paul identified marks of false teachers (1 Tim 6: 3). He discovered attitude of pride and that their teachers were using Godliness as a way of financial gain and not true ministration. 1 Tim 4:5-10, He said that the outcome of the falsehood generated pride, envy, quarrelling, malicious and constant friction 1 Tim 6: 4-5. The people were robbed of the truth because they were in darkness. The following are four clear facts that Satan was the counterfeit:

- I. Deception business 2 Cor. 11:3
- II. He targets the mind to always lead away simplicity and purity of devotion to church 2 cor. 11:3
- III. Satan never shows his ugly side but disguises to achieve his goal 2 Cor. 11:14
- IV. Satan does not do everything himself. He delegates his task and uses others to counterfeit the truth and to achieve his goal. 2 Cor. 11:15

Conclusion

The power of darkness cannot be confronted with physical strength. The fight encouragement in the fight is like of Elijah, Nehemiah, Stephen and others that overcame and made victory for Christians certain.

The Bishop's Presidential Address

The theme of the Synod: Fight the good fight of faith. (1 Tim 6:12)

Bishop Odedeji started his submission with the certainty that the forces of the devil, darkness, will not relent in attacking the Christian faith until we finish our course and race on earth.

He cautioned that losing the battle to sin is as good as losing the battle of life. He described the fight of faith as spiritual war faced to defend the territory and faith as a believer.

He said that being baptised is an anchor of recruitment into Christ's army to fight the devil, sin and the world.

Bishop Odedeji described the multifaceted historical context of the text as the directive of Paul to Timothy with the necessary armour needed to lead the Church in his (Paul's) absence. 1 Timothy 3:14-15.

The message treated the characteristics and issues of heretical teachers who falsified the doctrine when they have not accepted sound teachings (vs 3). They were more interested in arguments and disputes (vs 4). They taught for their greed for wealth that godliness was a means of gain, (vs 5,9-10). Paul reminded Timothy of the purpose of posting him to Ephesus to correct the falsehood of the teaching of the fake teachers, Tim 1:3-20.

Bishop Odedeji illustrated the nature of the fight as:

1. The fight is personal
2. We must fight
3. The fight for faith is spiritual
4. We do fight against the vain philosophies of this world. We fight against the lust of the flesh
5. We are already overcomers.

The Diocesan highlighted each nature of the weapons as illustrated in Ephesians 6:12-18 as the armour of God thus: Belt of Truth, Breast plate of righteousness, Shoes of the gospel of peace, Shield of faith, Helmet of Salvation, Sword of the Spirit, Prayer, Blood of Jesus Christ Rev 12: 1, 1 John 1:7, Heb. 10: 19, The name of Jesus Christ Proverb 18: 10, Psalm 61:3, Phil 2:9-11, Act 3; 1-9.

Other issues were extensively illustrated by the Diocesan. They included summary of church activities with gratitude to God for ability to progress despite economy challenges. There was consistency in paying stipends to priests and workers' salaries. The 3rd of Samuel Adegbite Anglican College with student population of 700 was completed. There were other infrastructure improvements. Clergy advancement in educational upgrading with 2 clergies obtaining Ph.D. and 18 other completing their master degrees within the past year were mentioned. The bishop was proud of the diocese's achievements within the Church of Nigeria. He recalled the decline in church attendance resulting from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic especially the poor economic state of the nation that impacted negatively on the finances of the church. Dr Odedeji acknowledged the government's efforts to address economic challenges.

Rebuilding the Cathedral

The President of Synod expressed confidence, trusting God, that the ongoing refurbishment of the Cathedral would be completed within 18 months as planned.

11th Year of Consecration

The Bishop, recalling the blessings and achievement since the 11 years of his consecration, expressed gratitude and appreciation to the entire church for selfless support, which he has received and his accomplishments. He said that he is focusing on investment to reduce financial pressure on Church members. Sources, he said, include the development of the former Bishop's Court land valued at 2 billion naira into a 10-floor high rise edifice for commercial uses.

President Ahmed Tinubu's one year in office as president of Nigeria

The Bishop, commenting on the one year of President Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu (GCFR) as Head of State of Nigeria, stated that it was too early to judge but that there is hope that the future looks bright for Nigeria.

The diocesan would not end his charge without acknowledge the dignitaries that graced the synod. According to him, the synod is well attended with such eminent personalities like: Mrs. Adejoke Orelope Adefulire, former Deputy governor of Lagos state, now Senior special adviser to the President of Nigeria, Mrs. Abimbola SaluHudein, Secretary to the Lagos State Government.

In attendance to grace the occasion and support the Diocesan were the Dean emeritus of the Church of Nigeria and retired Archbishop of Lagos province and Bishop of Lagos Diocese, The Most Rev. Dr. Ephraim Adebola Ademowo; the Bishop of Badagry, Rt. Rev. Dr. B.J. Adeyemi; the Bishop of Ijebu South West, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Babatunde Ogunbanwo, who led the communion; The Rt. Rev. Williams O. Aladekugbe, who with The Rt. Rev. Dr. Johnson Atere did the consecration of the communion elements. Others are The Rt. Rev. S.T. G Adewole, Rt. Rev. Prof. Bayo Obijole, Rt. Rev. Dr. Samuel Sowale. Rt. Rev. Dr. Rufus Adepoju, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Oluyamo, Rt. Rev. Oluwaseun Aderogba, Rt. Rev. Dr. Akinpelu Johnson, Rt. Rev. Olajide Adebayo, Rt. Rev. James Akinola (Rtd), Rt. Rev. Dr. Olusola Akanbi, and Rt. Rev. Bamidele Ibikunle from the Methodist church, Remo..

Also in attendance were the members of the House of Bishops, The Most Revd. Dr. Segun Adeyemi, retired Bishop of Kwara and retired Archbishop of Province of Kwara; The Rt Rev. Prof Dapo Asaju, among others.

Also present were Diocesan officials, notably the Chancellor, Hon Justice Dr. B.O. Ogunade; the Deputy chancellor, Hon Phillips; the Registrar, Prince Bambo Adesanya, SAN, Chief Olusegun Osunkeye and others.

The Diocesan eloquently appreciated their sacrifices as well as the legal team, Bishop's nominees and appointees

Goodwill messages

The Clerical Secretary, The Ven. Olukayode Oredugba informed the house that 20 goodwill messages from dioceses, 3 from institutions and 2 from individuals were received for the occasion.

The President of the Synod read the Profile of the Synod Persons that included Mr. Wale Adegbite, Ven Ezenwa Ifeanyi Chukwu Joseph, Ven Emmanuel Bamidele Oluwadare Adagabada and The Rt Rev. Dr S.O Sowale (rtd).

Diocesan Board report

Ven. Kayode Oredugba, the Clerical Synod Secretary stated that the diocese partner on land matters had taken possession of 2,400 square metres of the Diocese's 24,000 square meters land adjacent to AVMCC.

He said that the Bishop's court located at 102 Oduduwa Crescent GRA Ikeja was very much in use. Also, he said that The Haven Event Centre has been turned to the Cathedral Tent Church pending the refurbishment of the Cathedral Church building. He said that virtually all courses at Ajayi Crowther University has been fully accredited by the Nigerian Universities Commission, NUC.

Auditor's report

The two auditors, Mr. Dele Onabanji and Mr. Joshua Okeowo Oderinde, presented their report in which they concluded that the financial performances of the diocese were in conformity with International Financial Reporting Standard.

Treasurer's report

The Diocesan Treasurer, Dr. Toyin Okeowo submitted the financial report that notwithstanding the Inflation in the country, the diocese did very well especially on the Covenant Seed Fund. He thanked the pioneer Bishop, The late Rt. Revd. Dr. Peter Awelewa Adebisi for his initiatives. He appreciated the current Bishop Rt. Revd. Dr. James Olusola Odedeji, for his progressive ideas, and his determination to hold-on to the vision of the founding fathers.

Amendments to the Constitution

Two amendments were made to the Diocesan constitution;

- 1) Addition of a female member as Assistant Treasurer of the diocese.
- 2) Amendment of the number of Synod delegates from churches according to their financial strengths.

Financial Literacy Lecture

Mr. Wale Adegbite gave a lecture on national cost-of-living crisis. He submitted that the cause of high cost of living is when income is less than expenditure.

He said that Nigeria issue is worse because of rapid and sharp population growth that cannot be maintained with poor food production especially when Nigeria is not a producing but a consuming Country.

Election of Synod officers

The Synod endorsed the motion moved by Ven Nwabasili and supported by Adim Godson that the current officers of the Synod should continue in their current positions throughout the 9th Synod. Elections were conducted for other representative positions in organizations to which the diocese belong.

Day 3

Day activities 3 commenced with Holy Communion Service where the Rev. Dave Ayo-Ologundu preached the sermon. The theme was: The Reward for Faithful Fighters.

While the preacher enumerated variety faiths that included saving, miracle, miracle faith and gift among others. He said that the faith to fight for is the faith that leads to eternal life. He said that only the servants of God can fight the fight of faith which is the hallmark of christianity.

The preacher listed the criteria of faithfulness as dying for Christ (Gal. 2:20), self-denial (Luke 9:23), Heaven consciousness (Col. 3:2, Phil. 3:12), Connect to the master (John 5:30) as Job, Daniel and Paul were committed. He concluded that the rewards of faithfulness are: Victory, More Responsibility, Unfolded Mystery, Guaranteed Eternal Life and the Crown of Righteousness.

Bible Study 2

The Venerable E.B.B Omowaye continued the bible study on the Synod Theme: Fight the Good Fight of Faith. He described the person of Christ as in Revelation Chapter One as a faithful witness who is a refuge, first born from the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. He emphasized that Timothy

successfully carried out his assignment in Ephesus through his reformatory teachings, inserting ability to endure their Orthodoxy and by instituting a pure church.

Committee reports

The house went into committee sessions after which reports were submitted. Motions were moved and passed. A comprehensive communique generated and signed by the Clerical Secretary, The Revd. Olukayode Oredugba, Lay Secretary: Mrs Olateju Akindolire and the Rt Revd. Dr James Olusola Oladeji. Bishop Diocese of Lagos West was presented to the congregation.

Day 4:

Thanksgiving service

The thanksgiving service of the 1st session of the 9th Synod of the Diocese of Lagos West commenced at 9:00am with Holy Communion Service in which the celebrant was the Diocesan, the Rt Revd. Dr James Olusola Odedeji. The preacher was the Rt Revd Dr Cornelius Adagbada. The Bishop of Jebba Diocese, The sermon topic was "Ignited and Empowered by the Holy Spirit".

The preacher emphasised on Ignited and Empowered. He said that the prerequisite for fighting the fight of faith is to be ignited by the holy spirit. He said that to be empowered requires invitation to live a life that reflects deep relationship with God. He said that it awakens accomplishment of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Cornelius Adagbada said that spirit of faith was given to a few individuals in the Old Testament but, that the coming of Jesus Christ spread the gift and made it available to everybody.

His emphasis was in the ability of the Holy Spirit in anointing and enabling the preachers and practitioners of the gospel to know the Holy Spirit for ignition and empowerment. The aptitude of the holy spirit he said, includes: restoration, retrieval, empowerment, direction, guidance, and divine guidance and instructions. It is the duty of the Christian to be committed to have a sense of being led by the Holy Spirit so that he does not become a victim of circumstances that can lead to loss of sight.

Bishop Adagbada highlighted that evangelism requires intension, passion, obedience, deep relationship with God, love and sacrifice.

In conclusion, the preacher challenged Christians to lay their lives on the altar of God. He said that worship brings wisdom while prayer brings strength.

Thanksgiving

The conventional thanksgiving end of synod session was communal and ceremonial as each Archdeaconry and the Cathedral, one after the other, joyfully danced to the altar with their offerings. They were blessed and wished divine provisions and capability till and beyond the next (2nd session) congregation.

Adjournment, closing and recession

In his closing remarks, the Diocesan said that since God is the God of prosperity and the owner of the silver and gold (Hag. 2: 8 & 9), and that He has good plans for us (Jer 29:11, John 2, Proverb 10:22 and He blesses hard workers who follow biblical principles doe prosperity (Psalm 34:8-10, Joshua 1:7-8). The president of Synod delivered his prophetic blessing, appreciation and farewell and announced the adjournment till the 2nd session of the 9th Synod. The Boys and Girls Brigades ceremonial discharge of flags preceded the colorful Episcopal habits of clergy, lay officers and the choir and the congregation rendering the recessional hymn.

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SOCIETY PROFILE

Spotlight on CHRISTIAN FRIENDS: 2024 Harvest host society

Year of formation

Septuagesima Sunday, February 1992

Aims and objectives

To propagate the gospel, serve the church and the society at large

To commit time, talent and treasure to the work of evangelism.

Pioneer members

1. Chief Samuel Adegbite
2. Omo-Oba Dayo Adesanya
3. Dr. Okunola Ajayi-Obe
4. Chief Gbenga Akinnawo
5. Chief S.M. Akinwale
6. Mr. Olusegun Durojaiye
7. Dr. Tunde Ibidapo-Obe
8. Chief Tunji Odegbami
9. Engr. Yinka Odukoya
10. Dr. Yemi Ogunbiyi
11. Omo-Oba Kole Ojutalayo
12. Chief Fred Okunola
13. Mr. Duro Olatunji
14. Prince Clement Olowokande
15. Chief (Dr) Olusegun Osunkeye

Pioneer executive members

1. Chief Samuel Adegbite - Charter President
2. Chief (Dr) Olusegun Osunkeye - Vice-President
3. Omo-Oba Dayo Adesanya - Secretary
4. Prince Clement Olowokande - Treasurer/Financial Secretary
5. Dr. Tunde Ibidapo-Obe - Social Secretary/Welfare Officer

Current executive members

1. Bro. Olakunle Sodipo - President
2. Bro. Segun Akintemi - Vice President
3. Bro. Bro. Siji Ijogun - Immediate Past President
4. Bro. Seyi Osunkeye - General Secretary
5. Bro. Wale Adegbite - Treasurer
6. Bro. Femi Tejuoso -Welfare Officer
7. Bro. Folu Oguntade Assistant General Secretary
8. Bro. Mayokun Ogedengbe - Evangelical Coordinator
9. Bro. Yele Adewole - Financial Secretary
10. Bro. Jide Odeyemi - Social Secretary
11. Bro. Wale Fasuyi - Investment Adviser

Achievements so far

Full sponsorship to Rev. P. O. Otunsanmi at the Emmanuel Theological College, Ibadan.

Rehabilitation of the access road across the Railway Crossing at the Archdeacon Ogunbiyi Memorial Church, in Ikeja.

Donations to the Pacelli School for the Blind in Surulere, Rehabilitation and Training Centre, at Majidun, in Ikorodu, the SOS Village, Isolo, the Spinal Cord Injuries Association, the Prison Department in Lagos State and the Wesley School for the disabled in Surulere.

Construction of the Priests' Apartment in 2003 just after the Church attained the status of a Cathedral in November 1999.

Rebuilding from scratch St. Michael's Anglican Church and vicarage in Michika, Yola. That Church had been burnt by the insurgents. The Church was formally handed over to the Yola Diocese at a ceremony on Sunday the 29th of January 2017.

Renovation of one of the buildings at the Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta.

External painting of Priests' Apartments and internal & external painting of Vining House.

Purchase and distribution of food packs to the needy during the COVID 19 lockdown in 2020.

Donation of Personal Protective Equipment to the Lagos State

University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) and Gbagada General Hospital during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

Payment of Hospital bills for indigent persons at LASUTH in 2020.

Purchase and distribution food packs to the underprivileged persons in December 2021

Financial contribution to the construction of the Bishop's Court of the Diocese of Lagos West.

Financial support towards the refurbishment of Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral.

Purchase and distribution of Church Hymnal and worship books to four churches within the Diocese of Lagos West.

Substantial contribution towards the renovation of the Anglican Chapel serving the Nigerian Law School Campus at Bwari, Abuja.

Future plans

To continue the advancement of evangelism and the propagation of Christian faith within and outside Nigeria.

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This year's harvest of good faith solidly on course — Seyi Osunkeye

The General Secretary of Christian Friends Society, Mr. Seyi Osunkeye, in this interview conducted by GODWIN OFULUE talks about the 2024 Harvest, which is being hosted by his society. Below, the interview:

How did the lot to host this year's harvest fall on your society?

We were formally informed by the Cathedral Management in December 2023.

Have you performed similar roles in the past?

Yes. In 1996 and in 2012

What are we to expect this year. Are you bringing in any innovation?

We will not disappoint.

Did you observe any anomaly in previous editions that you would like to correct or address?

No anomalies have been observed. We will however aim to improve previous editions.

Kindly remind us of the harvest timetable.

Rogation – May 5.

Harvest Launch – June 2.

All Men's Harvest – June 16.

Children & Grandparents' Harvest – July 28.

Youth Harvest – August 25.

Corporate & Professional Harvest – September 15.

National Harvest – September 29.

All Women's Harvest - October 13.

Adult Harvest – October 27.

Senior Citizen's Harvest – A date in November

Family Harvest – June 9 to November 24

Area & Diaspora Harvest – June to November

Clergy, Church Leaders' Harvest – June to November

Societies & All Ministries Harvest – June to November

Bishop's Harvest – December 1st

Have you set for yourself any target to meet?

No target was set for 2024 Harvest.

Do you have any fears?

The Lord is our helper (Psalm 28:7 & Psalm 121). Thus, we have no fears.

What message do you have for AVMCC concerning this year's harvest?

This is the Harvest of Good Faith – Mathew 17:20

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VOX POP

Parishioners speak on hard times

It is no longer news that the faithful in most parts of the world are facing one challenge or the other.

Nigeria is not left out, as citizens face hard times of various dimensions. Christian Outlook speaks with some faithful on how they are dealing with the unfavorable situations. They speak with SANMI SALAMI and AUSTIN OTOIGHILE. Below are their responses:

Faith Okoli, Good Shepherd Society

To say that the times are hard is an understatement. The hard time is glaringly obvious and can be felt in our political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental terrains.

On how we survive, we have continued to sustain and consolidate our trust and faith in God, tenaciously holding and connecting to His promised assurances in Philippians 4:19 and 2 Corinthians 9:8. With full assurance in God's words, we have been able to Stop; Switch and Adopt various measures required for surviving the prevailing hard times.

The following are some of the key measures we have been abiding by:

A. We had to put a stop to frivolities/unnecessary expenditures

Does sustaining life/growth/good health of the family depend on the expenditure? if no, we do not bother with the expense

B. We strive to switch to credible less expensive alternatives without compromising the quality of offering.

Does the cheaper alternative have severe effect/consequence on the quality of life of the family? If yes, ...then we do not scale down to the cheaper alternative but maintain the existing cost item

C. Ultimately, a lot of coping mechanisms have adopted and they include, among others:
Sourcing of cheaper and effective means of bulk buying of foodstuff through interaction with farmer's intermediaries

Maximising opportunities to incorporate "Home meals" (lunch boxes) for every family member to reduce the frequency of eating out.

Most importantly, we consistently/persistently saturate ourselves with the consumption of biblical teachings

Our confidence and peace in the face of the current challenges remains strong, unwavering and unbroken because we have consciously and intentionally handed the wheels and rudder of all that concerns us to God. He is the ultimate navigator that knows how, where and when to steady the rudder, calm the storm and bring us out stronger and unhurt.

Nkechi Echeozo, Hospital & Prison Ministry, Band of Glory society

In these challenging times, I have found solace in my faith and trust in God's sovereignty. I have implemented various strategies to cope with difficulties, such as prioritising my spiritual life through consistent prayer and personal Bible study.

Additionally, I have sought advice on diversifying my sources of income and have engaged in fellowship with like-minded individuals at my workplace.

Moreover, I have focused on practising gratitude, maintaining my physical and mental well-being through self-care, and seeking guidance from mentors.

By intentionally serving others according to God's dictates and keeping an eternal perspective, I have been able to navigate these tough seasons with hope, peace, and resilience.

Despite the challenges, I continue to rely on God's strength and the support of those around me to persevere and find joy in the midst of trials.

The above adjustments have allowed me to maneuver through difficult times with a greater sense of hope, calmness, and resilience. I have developed the capacity to embrace the journey, trust in the kindness of the divine, and find joy in the face of hardship.

It's not easy but God has been my strength and with the help of some wonderful people he placed in my life even when I feel like quitting, I get back on my feet knowing that God is working out His purpose for me.

In all, it's the grace of God that has kept me going to overcome the hard times because by strength shall no man prevail.

Engr Sola George, Children Sunday school, Bible Study Preparatory Group, Torch Bearers Society.

I have been managing by relying on the unwavering promises of the Lord God Almighty as outlined in Psalms 23. The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not be in want. He prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemies and anoints my head with oil. I am confident that goodness and mercy will accompany me throughout my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

It seems as though God foresaw the difficult times and made provisions for me in advance. As a civil/structural engineer, I am occupied with projects, and my clients are compensating me accordingly.

The word of God remains relevant and potent in all circumstances, even in Nigeria. Passages such as Psalm 24:1-4, Psalm 1:1-3, Psalm 34:10, and 2 Chronicles 16:9A affirm that God is capable and willing to deliver us. He has already made provisions for the challenges we perceive as contemporary issues.

Stella, Fashion designer

I made a lot of changes in order to cope with the changing situation in the country.

In the area of food, I replaced eating out with cooking my food

I also replaced junk with more fruits and vegetables to get more nutrients and I reduced my eating from three times a day to twice a day; after all, body does not need that much food and food is expensive I buy only things that are necessary and I buy quality to ensure it lasts longer.

I reduced my movement, moving only when necessary. I stopped using Uber; rather, I use the bus, unless absolutely necessary to use uber.

I had to increase charges as the prices of materials I work with increased.

Omotola Onakoya, Business IT Leader

I regularly count my blessings, having a positive mindset and consciously guarding my thoughts.

I have also adapted to the times we are in by taking each day at a time and spending more time for spiritual and personal development by listening to sermons, reading books and professional trainings

I also listen to testimonies and stories that tell of God's goodness and motivate me.

Adesola Yeside Aladesawe, Programmes Manager/Voice-over personality

I have had to be a bit more frugal with spending, buying only the things I really need. I've also had to make changes going for alternatives and relatively cheaper products on some household items/needs.

I have also looked at improving on skills for attracting other sources of income. Most importantly, I've had to trust God a lot more for provisions.

Makinde Ogunleye, Land use consultant, legal practitioner and farmer.

I employ a multidisciplinary approach to business, which affords me multiple income stream. This is essential for survival in any environment.

PAGES 13, 19, 20, 21, 34, 35

COVER STORY

Archdeacons declare: Christians are wired to face, overcome difficult times

By JACINTA OLUSOGA, with interviews conducted by AUSTIN OTOIGHILE, FUNMI AZIKE and GODWIN OFULUE

Christians have been told that they are wired to face and overcome hard times and that hard times are but routine tests to examine and strengthen their faith in Christ Jesus.

They have also been told not to succumb to trials no matter how severe and overwhelming they manifest.

The Dean of Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC), The Venerable Ebenezer Adewole, and the Chaplain/Coordinator of the Diocese of Lagos West Discipleship Training, The Ven. Nse Enoch, gave the admonition in separate interviews with Christian Outlook.

They did not stop at encouraging Christians to survive hard times, they also provided guides, laced with examples, on how to face and survive hard times.

They spoke against the backdrop of the prevailing hardship and suffering all over the world, of which Nigeria is largely affected. In fact, many believe the suffering is more severe in Nigeria than in other countries.

As a result of the hard times many a Christian have wondered why they and non-Christians should be united in suffering, saying they (the Christians) had since cast their burdens on the Lord Jesus Christ with the expectation that they should not suffer same fate as non-Christians..

Commenting on that reaction by some Christians, Venerable Ebenezer Adewole, attributed it to the dilution or pervasion of the Christian core message.

He drew attention of Christians to the fact in John 16:33, where Jesus Himself tells His followers (Christians) that in the world there would have tribulations, though He urges them to always be of good cheer because He has overcome the world.

The Dean further referred to the parable of the wheat and the tares, where both the wheat and the tares were to grow together until harvest time (Matt. 13:24-30).

Christians, according to the Dean, are not exempted from the challenges of the present generation, but are prepared and equipped to face the vicissitudes of life and to overcome.

He stressed that in times of hardship and sufferings, Christians can overcome and shine and withstand the situation better than non-believers.

He encouraged Christians not to be weary, and not to give up, as the current happenings had earlier been prophesied for the End of Age scenario (Matt.24).

In his comments, Ven. Nse Enoch, explained that suffering is a universal human experience but that the Christian faith provides a unique perspective and strength to navigate the challenges.

According to him, it is pertinent to understand the fact that Apostle Paul in 1Cor. 10:13 points Christians to the fact that there is no temptation that can overwhelm a true believer, but that God is faithful and will not allow anyone to be tempted beyond that which they are able to bear; and that while going through the temptation, God will provide a way of escape to enable the Christian to emerge victorious at the end.

The Ven. Enoch buttressed the above Biblical teaching of Paul by citing the events in the lives of some men in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, like Job, Joseph, David and Jesus, the Saviour of the world, who faced immense hardships, sufferings and persecutions, yet they persevered and even thrived in the face of adversity.

He also drew attention to the Apostles, who were the first set of Christians that continued to preach and serve despite beatings and imprisonments (Acts 5:40-42).

He further drew attention to when famine struck in Judea, the Church, saying they came together to support one another (Acts 11:27-30).

He cited the case of Stephen whose courageous witnessing of Christ led to his martyrdom (Acts 7), but also inspired others to witness fearlessly.

Talking about Christians shining at perilous times such as it is being witnessed, The Ven. Adewole said the fact that the current events had been prophesied earlier and Christians had a foreknowledge of it, made it more bearable than it would have been if it has suddenly manifested, unannounced.

He further stated that for Christians to shine in the prevailing times, they must understand that the Word of God would surely come to pass, having been prophesied, and that current happenings cannot be wished away, stressing that Christians can only prepare to weather it. He suggested that instead of complaining, Christians should first and foremost praise God for the foreknowledge and grace to be ready to go through it.

Secondly, the situation as it affects them should be discussed with God in prayer, seeking God's response and guidance on how to resolve the situation.

As a result, he said: "Christians should brace for whatever happens. An example is the case of Paul's thorn in the flesh. Paul took the matter to God in prayer. God did not remove the thorn, but God

assured him that His grace was sufficient for him. Paul was, therefore, able to cope with the situation because God provided a way of escape for him and He was still, despite the thorn in his flesh, able to do exploits, writing 13 of the books in the Bible.”

The Dean emphasised that it was a wrong doctrine to say that once Christians had given their life to Christ, they would no longer encounter troubles and tribulations.

The Venerable concluded by saying that troubles would indeed come but because of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Christian's perception and reactions would be different from that of the unbeliever and the results would also be different.

On the case of those contemplating suicide because of the current happenings, the Dean advised that no believer should give up, he drew attention to the cases where God's prophets, Elijah and Jonah, despaired under adverse conditions and God was ready to replace them. He stressed that no one has the right to terminate the life that he did not create. Suicide, he added, is a temptation Christians should not fall for as whatever anyone is going through would soon pass away.

“All Christians should do is to go to God in prayer and hear from Him as He has the solution to every situation,” he said.

Ven Adewole said Christians would always go through challenges commensurate with their level of faith to expose their true character and prepare them for eternity.

He said: “Only Christians who received the wrong doctrine of no challenges once one is in Christ are surprised and are unable to go through the challenges.

“The early Christians, in times past, were ready to and did die as martyrs. They received a gospel that prepared them for it. Jesus predicted his own suffering, and they witnessed Him as He went through it even unto death on the Cross.”

The Dean advocated a return to the preaching of the correct doctrine about suffering as a Christian. Money, he said, could not take away challenges; neither could possession of cars and houses, saying every Christian is called to a life of endurance of challenges.

He said it was necessary to go through challenges to qualify for Heaven.

The Ven. Ebenezer Adewole, alluded to 2 Cor. 11:23-28, where Paul catalogued in the Bible, all the sufferings that he had to go through but he endured them all, rejoicing in his tribulations.

He advised Christians to endure tribulations, praising God as they go through the situations.

He narrated his personal experience with robbers, who came frequently to raid his home in one of the stations he served. He said he and his family were able to survive the attacks by praising God for a minimum of one hour before going to bed every night.

He also alluded to the story of Paul and Silas in prison, who praised and sang, and the Holy Spirit released them with power from the prison.

He noted that complaining about the leaders would not help as records had proven that though leaders had been changed over time, the situation appeared not to have changed.

“It is, therefore, evident that the solution to the problem does not lie with the leaders. Government can only give occasional reliefs to enable the people bear the situation,” he said.

Commenting on sufferings faced by contemporary Christians, Ven. Nse Enoch said: “Sufferings of contemporary Christians are more mild and bordered on economic struggles and social pressures, while early Christians faced more severe persecution.

“Today, Christians often struggle with comfort and complacency. People flee or give up when faced with challenges rather than relying on their faith and community.”

On handling hardship like Christians of old, Ven. Nse Enoch advised that spiritual guidance should be sought, through prayer and scripture.

“A support network of fellow believers, who can encourage and practically support the less privileged, should be put in place. Christians should also find ways to serve others even in small ways, to shift focus from their struggles to God's larger purposes,” he advised.

Comparing what Christians of old did when they were persecuted and the actions of today's Christians in similar situations, the Dean noted that currently there are more distractions now than was the case in the past, pointing to the allure of wealth, which he said is stronger now than it was in time past. He was of the view that people clamour more for wealth now and are more worldly, making the Christian character standard to fall.

He narrated the story of a man in the past, who helped people to keep their money and gave it to them intact whenever they came to collect it. The man, he said, would not even trade with the money to make a profit, as he considered such an act as sinful. The Dean urged today's Christians to exercise similar caution, restraint and do due diligence when engaging in business with Christians.

The Dean lamented that today's Christians seem to believe that God is too slow for them, and would, therefore, do anything to get out of hardships fast.

“Present day Christians are not ready to endure,” he lamented, pointing out that believers in time past would diligently and patiently train their children in the way of the Lord. “Parents were strict. They sent their children to Christian schools, because they saw beyond the intellect. They wanted schools where their children would imbibe the character of God, Godliness.”

He further stated that today, lesson teachers are employed by Christian parents to teach their children Mathematics, Chemistry etc, but none to teach them the Bible.

Citing his parents as example, he said they taught him the Bible, saying: “Parents, who do not have time to teach their children the Bible, should also employ a lesson teacher to teach their children just as they employ for the teaching of the academic subjects.”

The Ven. Nse Enoch is of the view that some modern day Christians have overcome incredible hardships, like the missionaries of old, who braved dangers to share the Gospel.

There are persecuted believers who remained faithful despite imprisonments and torture. He also believes that there are also, everyday Christians who face remarkable challenges with grace and courage.

On people leaving the country to other places to seek better welfare, he said God does not make mistake about people's places of birth.

“Having been born here, Nigerians have their destinies are located in the country. This does not mean that people should not leave the shores of the country. Nigerians can go out to be trained, but they should return home to fulfil their divine destinies,” he said.

He is of the conviction that anyone who leaves Nigeria and fails to return home has lost some part of his/her divine destiny.

He advised that all who go out of the country, perhaps on God's instruction, should plan to return home as there is something in the country for them.

On steps to be taken to handle current hardship in the country, Ven Adewole categorised hardship into economic and spiritual.

According to him, the solutions for both are embedded in the instructions of the Word of God.

He advised every believer to endure whatever they were going through and never to give up but to see their predicaments as tests and trials, a challenge allowed by God to bring some good.

He said it is written: “All things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

According to him, no hardship, whatsoever the magnitude, spiritual or economic, is meant to destroy a Christian.

“Even when going through the wilderness experiences, when it looks like one is abandoned and all alone, unable to pray, reading the Bible without understanding, everything is dry and there appears to

be nowhere to go, Christians are not to give up but keep going on, keep trusting, just as Prophet Habakkuk said in Habakkuk 3:17, 'Even though the fig tree will not blossom, even though there is no fruit on the olive tree, yet I will trust in God'

The Dean used himself as an example to buttress his point. He said that growing up, he had gone through various challenges, one of which was when his parents could not afford to pay his WAEC fee, which was only N110. His father made him repeat a year with the hope that by that time, the examination fees would have been put together.

"But even at the time the examination fee was due to be paid, the money was still not complete. The family prayed together and God intervened. The Principal of his school identified him as a potential successful WAEC candidate, and arranged to pay for him from the PTA Fund in 1988. My parents paid back the money over some months. I ended up with nine credits that year," he narrated.

He recalled that he and his immediate younger brother, who is also now a Dean in his own Diocese, would use a wheelbarrow to move traders' goods to markets.

With the money they earned from such menial task, they supported their family.

He advised Christians to take their challenges first to God in prayer and follow His instructions on what to do.

He also advised parishioners to let their pastors know what they are going through for prayers and counselling.

On what AVMCC is doing as a church to ameliorate the suffering, he said the church distributes relief items regularly to both members and non-members. He said: "While not encouraging people to turn themselves into a burden for the church, the church is ready to help her members and anyone in the body of Christ to bear part of their burdens."

God, he, however, said, is the ultimate solution emphasising that Christians should overcome challenges telling God, through prayer, about their challenges and seeking guidance to resolve it.

He urged all to be hopeful and commended the Cathedral for presenting solutions, to the best of its ability, to various challenges that confront members and non-members.

He identified efforts in health care, help for the needy through offertory contributions, and the Economic Empowerment Programme, some of the ways the Cathedral intervenes.

The Ven. Nse Enoch in his conclusion, said: "While sin, leadership failure and spiritual battles contribute to hardships, Christians must focus on faith and appropriate responses, rather than assigning blame."

He said though Christians are united in suffering with unbelievers, the Christians' hope and strength come from their union with Christ."

The Ven. Nse Enoch advised Christians to hold on to their faith in Christ, trusting in God's sovereignty and find strength in Christian Community and Scripture, noting that, even as Paul, has written, "For our light, momentary troubles are achieving for us, an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2Cor. 4:17).

He said: "With prayers and faith, we will emerge from hard times stronger, wiser and more radiant with God's glory."

Christians are not immune to hardship, says Odeneye

Mr Tunji Odeneye is a former Vice President of Equipping the Saints (ETS) Ministries. He is an evangelist and disciple maker. He is also the Superintendent/Coordinator of Sunday School, Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral. In this interview, he says no Christian is immune to hardship. He speaks with AUSTIN OTOIGHILE.

Many Christians in Nigeria may be wondering why they face hardship after casting their burdens onto Christ. They can't understand why they should suffer with unbelievers? It seems a contradiction.

Why would Christians think they should not suffer hardship? Firstly, there is nothing like a “suffer-less” Christian. It is a false doctrine that brandishes itself in the chorus we sing: “Me I no go suffer.”

The reason everyone faces hardship, believer or not, is that we live in a fallen (sin-infested) world, filled with a crooked and perverse generation or people. Accidents happen to Christians, due not only to their own, but other people's carelessness, wickedness and unreasonable attitude.

But the beauty of it all is that, for a child of God, God has given him/her resources to deal with and overcome such afflictions. “In this world, you will have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,” Jesus told his disciples in John 16:33. Peter wrote: “Cast all your cares upon Him for He cares for you.” Secondly, the fact that you have declared your allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ as His disciple means that you are marked out a target by the kingdom of Satan.

Psalm 27:5 promises: “For in the time of trouble, He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle, He shall hide me.”

Some Christians also face hardship when they disobey God's commands. The bible was written for our obedience, in addition to our learning. So, there is no contradiction!

But were our forefathers in the faith not insulated or protected from sufferings?

No Christian is immune to hardship. The devil runs to and fro seeking someone to devour. So, I do not believe that our “fathers” were insulated. Did they not have rainstorms, thunder strikes, hot weather and wild animals' invasion in their time?

Joseph was imprisoned in his innocence; Daniel was lion-vaulted for praying to God! David was hunkered down for many years after being hailed by women of Israel as killer of 10,000! What did each of them do to warrant such ordeals?

How did early Christians manage or tackle hardship? Kindly oblige us two or three examples?

Manage? They overcame! You do not manage the devil. It is folly to hang on to the unwise cliché: “If you want to dine with the devil, have a long spoon”. Don't dine with him, deal with Him. Speak the word: “It is written.” Use the sword of the Spirit, not an imaginary spoon. Meshach Shadrach and Abednego told the king: Daniel 3:17-18: “If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image, which you have set up.” What about Joseph, the son of Jacob?

How would you compare Christians of old with Christians of today in terms of handling hardship?

It is the same old foe. He has not changed from being a liar and father of lies. So, as he lied to Adam and Eve, he is still in the same business. Yet, it is the same God: Malachi 3:6 “For I am the Lord, I do not change” What today's Christian faces is the information overload that is causing him to be tossed to and fro. There is more lawlessness now than ever before. But what I say is this: “He gives more grace” James 4:6. So, we have no excuse to complain of “more hardship”! His grace is more than sufficient to see us through. Let me say that evil will continue to increase in intensity as more godless people go on the rampage, but God's grace is far greater than all these rumblings, rumours and ruses.

Are contemporary Christians getting it wrong? Is fleeing the country, for example, a good option?

Flee? The whole earth lies under the sway (dominance, influence) of the evil one, 1 John 5:19b. In whatever location you find yourself, the evil one has an already prescribed cocktail of hardships. The deceiver gives men the impression that once you get out there, Eldorado arrives. But there, though you may not hear “Up NEPA”, you are working to pay down credit cards and bills, and keep up with the Joneses. You are subject to more restrictive interpersonal laws. You are locked into work; you have no time to relate with other humans. But the temptations, the ancestral and inherited evils and spirits travel with you and would not disappear! And in the survival race, you are made to think you do not need God as everything is at your call and beckon.

I always counsel the younger ones: “go and work abroad to broaden your professional experience, because as soon you desire to settle there, they place the glass ceiling above your head no matter how talented you are.”

Kindly give steps Christians should take in handling current hardship?

Very simple, take it to the Lord in prayer. “Call upon Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things you have not known” Jer. 33:3. Ask God to show you where it is all coming from. Seek the counsel of true Christian elders. Read the word of God for intuition. Give prayer requests. Be humble. Instead of fleeing the land, flee from sin and draw near to God. Seek help of men. God blesses men through men. Also learn to adjust to the realities on ground. Philippians 4:6-7 has good counsel. No anxiety, All prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Then He gives the peace to garrison your heart and mind from worrying about 'hardship'.

You see, God is always glorified through our suffering. How else can you enter His glory? Romans 8:17-18. Present suffering is like dust or vapour, very light. Future glory is “gidigba” (great) and “gbangba” (huge).

Many would blame the hardship on the land on; some would blame leaders and their bad policies, while others would say it's end-time signs. What would you say?

We need to understand the spiritual history of our country before apportioning any “blame”. Our foundation is faulty. It is not only about 1914. It is about our terms of living together. We have abandoned the peaceful and equitable constitutional accord our early fathers agreed upon. Until we overthrow the 1999 fraudulent constitution, gather together the "ethnos" (nationalities) to agree the terms of our "modus vivendi" (peaceful coexistence), we will simply be passing the buck or the blame for our boring or banal existence. Even if we hook on to 'end time' signs, we as Christians are still to "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

Do you have any message of hope for Christians?

For a true child of God, Christ in us is the hope of glory. It means Christ is among us, and is in us. His presence is with us, His power works in us, we can face any hardship and overcome. For us, no matter how hard it may be, we should trust God that it will all turn out for His glory and our testimony. James wrote: “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (1:2-3). That patience actually matures or brings us to perfection or completeness. So we must never lose the living hope, which we have received through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember Acts 14:22 “We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God. No cross, no crown.

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I was once a Muslim, says new Cathedral verger

By AUSTIN OTOIHILE

The newly appointed Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC) Verger, Mr. Bolaji Olakune Daisi, has said he started life as a Muslim.

Since he embraced the Christian faith, there is no looking back and he has grown to become the Cathedral verger, which he cherishes as divine appointment.

Who is a verger?

A verger is a church official who keeps order during services. Usually a layperson, he assists in ordering religious services, particularly in Anglican churches. The duties of the verger vary from parish to parish.

The new Verger, Daisi, was born in Lagos State on October 1979 to the late Chief Olatunde and Mrs. Christie Daisi.

His early childhood, he said, was eventful and filled with very cherished memories in Ibadan.

He attended the Sacred Heart Primary School and proceeded to Loyola College Ibadan in 1989. He concluded his secondary school education at the Wesley College of Science in 1995.

His university education was at the University of Ibadan, from where he obtained Bachelors of Science in Pure & Applied Chemistry (2001) and Masters of Science in Analytical Chemistry & Environmental Toxicology (2004).

He undertook the mandatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme in Jos, Plateau State in 2000 and transferred to Lagos to join Cadbury Nigeria PLC (now Mondelez Cadbury).

He has garnered experience in Supply Chain Management, Business Development, Project Management, Sales & Marketing in over 23 years across Manufacturing, Food & Beverage industry, Insurance, Construction, Cement and Healthcare Industries in Nigeria and across West Africa States.

He says: "I am currently, the Head of Commercial and Business Intelligence at Transport Services LTD (TSL), an indigenous Haulage and Logistics Service provider.

According to him, his journey to Jesus started as a young boy in 1985.

He said: "I had over many months drawn to worship and praise as a young Muslim and I asked my Muslim father to take me to witness congregational service in the old grounds of the Cathedral Church of St James the Great, Oke Bola, Ibadan.

"My journey progressed quickly, I later joined the church choir at Anglican Church of the Messiah, Bodija, Archdeaconry (1995-98) and participated in church, archdeaconry and Diocesan football teams throughout my undergraduate days. "I was Youth President under Ven Titus Babatunde Olayinka (now Bishop T.B. Olayinka of Ogbomosho Anglican Diocese) between 1999 and 2000. "I was baptised in 1995 and later confirmed in 1996 by the late Bishop Olajide with Ven. Lasebikan present (now retired Bishop of Ondo Anglican Diocese)."

He was until March 2024, a member of the Cathedral Guild of Stewards before he was appointed as the Priests Verger of the Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral, Oba Akinjobi Way, Ikeja GRA, Lagos.

On his marital status, he says: "I am married to pretty Adukę Tamunoene HART-DAISI, a serving member of the Cathedral Guild of Stewards."

And on his hobby, he says: "I love nature and adventure, and in my spare time I like to research history, international commerce and football.

"I support Shooting Stars Sports Club (3SC, Ibadan), Arsenal Football Club (England) and Real Madrid CF (Spain) and contribute to teaching in Lagos State Public Primary schools to teach Numeracy with United for Education Foundation (a non-for-Profit Organisation), to contribute to the love for Arithmetic education in Lagos public primary schools.

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NEW CATHEDRAL

New Cathedral will be ready Sept. 2025, despite odds — Adewole

Despite unforeseen developments, the 2025 projection for the completion of the new Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC) will be achieved. The optimism is expressed in this interview granted by the Dean of Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC), The Ven. Ebenezer Adewole. The interview was conducted by GODWIN OFULUE, AUSTIN OTOIGHILE and FUNMI AZIKE

When the Christian Outlook interviewed you on August 15, 2023, you said that after the hosting the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) by AVMCC on August 27, 2023, members would be relocated

from the Cathedral to a Tent Church for services and other church activities. The movement, you said, would make it possible for the reconstruction of the new Cathedral to commence. The movement to the Tent Church has since taken place as you projected and the construction of the new Cathedral has been going on for about a year now. Going by the work done so far, are you still hopeful that the one-and-half years target for the completion of the new cathedral still stands?

Thus far, we thank God that we were able to commence work immediately after the Church of Nigeria's programme that held at the old Cathedral last year in August. As planned, we relocated to the Tent Church in September, 2023 and since then we have been worshipping there.

The rebuilding of the Cathedral started in October. We had a little delay in the contractor moving to site; we lost about two weeks, not up to a month, and then the work started in October and it has been going on steadily.

Since we started in October, the workers only went for a Christmas break, though it took them about two weeks. The foundation was laid, and the demolition of parts of the structure has been done. The foundation is very critical and it took some time.

The construction was divided into three phases. The first phase had to do with the carcass, from the foundation up to the roofing level.

The second phase is where the challenge really is, because close to 70 per cent of needed materials were to be imported, and you know what the dollar is saying now, but we are trusting God for success. We are praying that God lead us to people whose minds He has prepared.

As of today, we are still on course with the 18 months projection for completion; we are still very much on course. Some items that will be brought in from overseas have been paid for, because some people even donated in dollars. I can tell you that people are ready for the work. Prayers are ongoing. I believe so much in prayers because I'm so weak and powerless. I depend on God for everything.

Were there unforeseen challenges that came up as the construction progressed?

At the committee level, we discuss issues frankly and look at various options and then we take steps. We don't wait until everything is perfect before we move, because we know that even while we are moving, we can still change our style or whatever, so we don't need to wait until everything is perfect. This implies there will be unforeseen developments. But the contractor is a young man, who is ready to work with us as events unfold.

On the challenge of dollars and related matters, we made huge advance payment and got materials in October and that helped us to, at least, be ahead of the changes in prices, especially the one we witnessed in December, January and February.

Many individuals and corporate bodies in Nigeria are lamenting that their projects have been adversely affected by the ugly twist in the nation's economy, particularly the foreign exchange crisis; but you have remained upbeat. How would you explain your optimism?

It is not about me or about us; it is about God. No hurdle stops God and His works. Most of us that grew up in various parts of the country would confirm that the best buildings are the churches, no matter the situation in the country. So, the same thing is going to happen here. Nothing can stop the work of God and eventually it will emerge the best.

We are going to have two full galleries. There will be one, and then another one on top. So the building is moving up, and there is going to be an extension of the outer side, and the place where we usually have meetings at the end of service, is coming inside.

There is going to be an elevator that will lift the people to the first floor or second floor. It is going to be something entirely different, something that will serve the next generation.

And when exactly will parishioners begin to savour these promises by the new Cathedral?

My prayer is that come September, 2025, the building will be ready.

Have parishioners done well enough in terms of rallying support, financially and materially, for the new cathedral?

What I can say is that this is the ninth station in my ministry, seven of which I was a Vicar; and two, assistant.

Members of AVMCC are unique, unique in the sense that they want to grow spiritually. They love spiritual things. They love God, I can tell you that. I don't want to refer to some churches that look more like clubs, where their focus is just friendship. You invite them for prayers, they are not there, you preach the word of God, you see their reactions, they are resisting. I have not experienced that in Vining; so I see Vining members as people who want to grow spiritually.

Number two, up to 25 per cent of members of AVMCC are generous givers. Some people are here, who don't give anything; they are just looking. Some are here because of the possibility of getting connections in the church, what they will get; but the 25 per cent that are generous to the church are genuinely generous. They give.

I pastored one church where it was only one man doing everything. Thank God for the man, very well blessed, he's still alive today. If the church needs 25 million today, he will give it, and he will not participate in the politics of the church. He comes to worship, and before you say the grace, he's gone, because members will rush him, yet he is still doing for them, many of them.

In fact, if the man leaves the church, close to 100 people will leave, because he gave some of them jobs, he gave them business contacts and everything. But in Vining, it is more than one person.

So this is my assessment. Vining members are good people, they love God, and they want to know Him more.

None of us is perfect, but they want to know God. Look at our Bible Study; the attendance can improve, but it is not bad, and it is so because most of our members don't live close to the church any longer. I know if they live around here, the attendance will be better. So we can only improve; we're not bad, but we can only improve.

But has there been any factor or development that threatened the one-and-half year projection for the completion of the Cathedral?

We believe God for funds and resources. If the economy of this nation and the prices of things had been stable, what we had at the beginning of the project would have done at least 80 per cent of the work, because the church had prepared for it for long.

How has the tent church been as a temporary worship place?

It has been a good place. Before we got there, God moved there ahead of us, and we have been enjoying Him in the place. In fact, we got a lot of commendations when we moved there. People came in and applauded us for doing a lot within a short time.

The major problem we have been having in the place is that of cooling, because it is a temporary structure, and so, as soon as the sun is up, the whole place is hot, but we are working on it and we keep improving so that worshippers can worship comfortably.

The Tent Church has been a good place and members have been coming. In fact, my fear that time was that our movement could reduce attendance to church. But I don't think it did.

What will happen to the Tent Church after the new Cathedral is completed?

You know the Tent Church actually belongs to the Diocese, So, we borrowed it from the Diocese, and we will return it to them.

In fact, at one of our Diocesan Board meeting, some people suggested that the Cathedral should pay for using the Tent Church, but the Bishop interjected: "What did you say? That my Cathedral should pay for using the tent? Do you know what this cathedral does for the Diocese? If you know what the Cathedral does for the Diocese, you would never raise that point ever again."

So what we will do is that we will return it back to the Diocese, they will then determine what they will do, but I can tell you the Diocese has been very magnanimous to the cathedral, recognising the role the cathedral has been playing in the diocese for the past years. Magnanimous in the sense that they did not only allow us to use the Tent Church, but also in the course of putting everything together there, the diocese gave us the sum of N10 million.

If we had considered the option of using Vining Hall as a place of service while the reconstruction of the cathedral lasted, maybe we would be running like four services to accommodate our number and that would disrupt a lot of things.

The Diocese also allowed us to use the Diocese land as store for the contractor.

The Diocese has a plan to use the whole land up to the tent church, but they cannot execute it now until we are done with the Cathedral. By the time we are done, there is a grand plan to develop the place.

The land belongs to the Diocese,

At times, we hear a preacher say "I am grateful to the Dean for allowing me to preach from his pulpit today." At some other times, preachers would say: "I am grateful to the Bishop for allowing me to preach from his pulpit today." Which is correct?

If the bishop is around, it is more appropriate to thank him. If he's around and I'm preaching, I will thank him. The structure is that the bishop heads the diocese; the diocese has geographical areas that are called archdeaconries. The cathedral is also like an archdeaconry, but more than an archdeaconry because the seat of the bishop is at the cathedral, so the cathedral functions first as an archdeaconry and also as the seat of the bishop. But the bishop is not limited to the cathedral; he oversees every church under him. The bishop is the principal minister; all of us are his agents. He has the apostolic ministry of the Diocese. He is like the minister of the Diocese, but because he cannot be in every church at the same time, he appoints pastors and gives them licences to operate on his behalf. Anytime he comes around, the person will have to disappear for him to appear. He is the principal minister.

The Cathedral has its own local task as the principal or mother church of the Diocese. For example, the Diocese has a budget for 2024, to pay all its pastors and all its agents. The cathedral also has a budget for 2024 in which we pay our own part of the budget of the diocese to enable the Diocese meet its own obligations.

We also have our own workers in the cathedral. All these security men, they are not working for the diocese; they are working for the cathedral. All our cleaners are working for the cathedral. It is only the clergy that are working for the Diocese. So it is more like we are the same, but we are also separate in the midst of the sameness.

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60th ANNIVERSARY

Commendations as AVMCC launches *The Chronicles* at 60th anniversary

By AUSTIN OTOIGHILE

The first female Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Prof. Folashade Ogunsola, has commended Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral for its impressive achievements, especially for spearheading acquisition of land in Lagos over the span of six decades.

Folashade, the esteemed guest speaker, made the commendation at the anniversary lecture and launch of AVMCC's historical publication, *The Chronicles*, which marked the culmination of the cathedral's 60th anniversary celebration on July 30, 2024, at the Cathedral Tent Church in GRA, Ikeja, Lagos State.

Ogunsola centred her lecture on the history of the AVMC, which later became AVMCC. She noted that the church was named after Leslie Gordon Vining, who was appointed bishop in 1940 and served as the first archbishop of the Province of West Africa.

Vining, she recalled, was known for his outreach to the Muslim community and his evangelical efforts. He passed away in 1955 while travelling back to England and was buried in Sierra Leone.

She also recalled that AVMCC originated from two separate churches, one for the white congregation and the other for the black congregation: The European civil servants worshipped at Ikeja Magistrate Court, while the black congregation worshipped at the Police College. Both churches, she said, had their origins in Saint Saviour Church, Lagos.

But in 1964, she recalled, the two churches merged to form the Anglican Church GRA. The church became a diocese in 1999, with The Rt. Rev. Peter Awelewa Adebisi serving as the pioneer bishop.

Since then, according to her, the church has experienced remarkable growth, expanding from a 50-member church to a congregation of over 8,000 worshippers.

"It now has 19 archdeaconries in ten local government areas of Lagos State, with The Rt. Rev. Dr. James Olusola Odedeji currently serving as the bishop.

In the past six decades, Ogunsola stated, the church had had a profound influence on society.

She said: "The church has had immeasurable impacts. It has been active in charitable initiatives, providing assistance to the homeless, reaching out to the prisons, and much more. Countless lives have been changed through the church's efforts. The church has been providing valuable counseling services and has been engaged in promoting cultural enrichment, advocacy, and social justice."

Ogunsola emphasised the church's significant societal impact and urged AVMCC to focus on attracting younger members by developing effective strategies. She stressed the importance of not being complacent and highlighted the need to mentor young people, engage them in non-controversial issues, and provide a sense of purpose and relevance.

Additionally, she pointed out the importance of accepting and engaging with younger members, who are prone to anxiety and high levels of political activity. She also noted that the present generation questions the relevance of religion and seeks sermons that connect with their daily lives and authenticity.

The vice chancellor urged the church to focus on solidifying the progress made, particularly in the realm of acquired lands. "This church has strong financial resources and a dedicated congregation. We should involve the youth in attracting more young members. If we remain faithful to our beliefs, we can bring about change."

The event was graced by the representative of Lagos State First Lady, Mrs. Abimbola Odumbaku, who is the chairperson of Ojuda Local Government; Bishop of Lagos West Diocese, The Rt. Rev Dr. James Odedeji; his wife, Dr Lydia Odedeji; the Bishop of Kwara Diocese, The Rt. Rev Dr Sunday Adewole; The Most Rev Dr Segun Adeyemi (the pioneer Dean of AVMCC, now retired Archbishop of Kwara Diocese; and numerous other distinguished guests.

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KNOW YOUR CATHEDRAL OFFICIALS, Compiled by PAULINE OGHENEKARO

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WOMEN

Women recording steady, modest achievements

By MERCY ADEWOLE

Christian Mothers in Anglican Church have been playing significant roles in advancing the work of God and helping themselves in meeting their corporate and individual aspirations..

They are often actively involved in various aspects of church life, such as participating worship services, prayer groups, community service and outreach programmes, teaching Sunday school, and contributing to the spiritual formation and growth of families.

In Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC), women are not left out in any of the above engagements and responsibilities; rather they engage in more activities to the glory of God and service to humanity.

Cathedral Christian mothers are valued for their dedication, love, and commitment to the church and their faith. They often find strength and encouragement in their relationships with other mothers in the church, as they navigate the joys and challenges of motherhood, while seeking to deepen their relationship with God.

The Lord must be blessed for His mercies and goodness toward all the women of AVMCC for the past years and for the leadership of all Mama Yards, who had laboured and worked tirelessly in this great Cathedral.

Again, God be glorified for the leadership opportunity as the current Vice President, and coordinator of Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral Christian Mothers. God has been faithful as we direct the affairs of women in this church and the entire Deanery.

Below are some women activities:

End of year/Diocesan Women Christmas Party

This normally takes place at the parish, Deanery and Diocesan levels and it is usually in December. The women sing praises to God for His faithfulness in our families.

Rededication services

This comes up at the beginning of the year, January to be precise. Cathedral women usually join other women from all over the Diocese to have their rededication services at the cathedral at the slated time by the Diocese. We thank God for the growth in attendance.

Bible Study & meetings

Every first and last Monday of each month is for women Bible Study, Prayer Meeting, and health talks. They have been recording improved participation, both physically and virtually sometimes to accommodate interested members, who are unable to attend. Appreciation goes to women chaplain, all women societies and medical practitioners that anchor programmes now and, previously. May God bless you all. Amen.

Workshops and outreaches

Women participate, in collaboration with the cathedral group of churches, in workshops, school outreaches, and medical outreach. Visits were made to Ipodo market (now POWA Market), LASUTH, STAC for evangelism. This is done regularly to train/disciple/empower traders and workers in the locality and also to lead them to Christ. This has become an annual event. Also, women engage in school evangelism on every Valentine's Day.

Enrollment for Mothers' Union and Women's Guild

New and qualified members of the cathedral are enrolled at stipulated date each year, both at the Diocesan and Deanery level. We thank God for adding to His fold.

Women magazine, Destiny Moulders

Women magazine, Destiny Moulder is becoming more vibrant and appreciated. The annual magazine is under the supervision of my humble self and it is launched at every Mothering Sunday.

Young Wives and Royal Gems/Vessels have their meetings regularly

Women Organisation Tuck-shop is now open in the Cathedral, thanks to the church management for approving a space.

Creche to a full-fledged nursery/primary school

To the glory of God, the Cathedral Crèche has been upgraded to full fledge nursery and primary school. May His name be praised forever in Jesus' name, Amen.

Great Destiny Moulders Nursery and Primary School is a citadel of learning, synonymous with academic excellence, creativity, and Godly value, where morals and the fear of God are taught.

The Bible says: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Prov. 10:27.

This outstanding school started as a tiny seed (Crèche) many years ago. This could be traced to the regime of Mrs Adeyemi during their tenure as the Dean of the Cathedral. The aim was to help the young mothers keep their babies in safe hands and environment so as to enable the mothers to focus on their jobs without distraction and at the same time get a good and conducive environment for their children, and this ran for so many years under the leadership of all the Dean wives of the Cathedral. When Ven. Ebenezer and my humble self resumed at the Cathedral in 2020; one of the charges that Mama Lagos West, Dr. Mrs. Lydia Olukemi Odedeji, committed into their hands was that "she did not want the creche to die". As a matter of fact, there was no creche when we resumed because it ceased to exist in March of that year as a result of COVID-19.

That very day, we resolved to raise the school's standard with the help of God and the backing of our Father and Mother, the Diocesan, The Rt Rev Dr. James and Dr. Mrs. Lydia Odedeji, to the next level.

In February 2021, we took a bold step of faith to open the creche. Four children came on board, and the journey started. The desire not to raise children to feed other schools propelled us to start the school's registration. They registered the school with the Lagos State Government and CAC, with the name Great Destiny Moulders Nursery And Primary School Ltd.

In September of that year, we started pre-school with the children from the creche, four of them to be precise. We sincerely appreciate parents, who entrusted their children to us at that early beginning.

In the 2022/2023 session, the school experienced increase; we had 19 pupils on the role, as other pupils joined the school. Since then, we have continually improved on our mandate to achieve our vision: raise Godly and morally sound pupils for the society.

Following the movement of the Diocesan office from Adetiloye House to the new Bishop Court, the school was given a place that could be called her own, which significantly increased the school enrolment. All thanks to our father, the Diocesan, and our Mama, Mama Lagos West.

This year, by the special grace of God, the school graduated five pupils from Preschool Two to Nursery One and six pupils from Nursery Two to Primary One. To God be all the glory.

In conclusion, we thank everyone, who has identified with this Godly vision and contributed to its success. To mention a few, we thank Rev Bamigbola, Mrs. Johnson Olubukola, Daddy and Mummy

Faloyin for their encouragement and seasoned support. May the Almighty God reward your labour of love in Jesus name, Amen.

Special thanks to all women executives, parents, the Cathedral wardens, and the Dean of the Cathedral, Ven. Ebenezer Adewole. You will never labour in vain in Jesus' name. Amen.

Cathedral members and parents all over the Diocese of Lagos West are encouraged to register their children in this great school. GOD BLESS YOU ALL AS YOU DO SO. AMEN.

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Be holy, Omoyelu tells fathers on Fathers' Day

By BAYO OGUNYEMI

All believers must long after holiness, pray for it, even struggle for it with the deepest yearnings of the heart.

This admonition was contained in a soul-lifting sermon delivered by the Canon Residentiary, The Venerable Abiodun Omoyelu, on Fathers' Day.

In the sermon, titled 'Christian and Holy People of God,' Omoyelu charged all men to live a life pleasing to God and to continue to see themselves as the image of God, called to holiness and not uncleanness. "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness".

According to him, the God of our fathers hath chosen them that they should know His will and hear His voice of his mouth. "For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:14-15)

He cited John 15:16 to support his message. It reads: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it to you".

The Venerable defined Christians as treasured and holy people of God.

"By definition, Christians are followers of Christ in principle, in action and in deed. They (Christians) are then called out and live their life based on the word of God.

Treasured means to value, to cherish and guide jealously; while holy people are set apart for God's use," he stated.

For the fact that Christians are the image of God, Omoyelu added that they are loved, cherished and valued by God through salvation, citing Ephesians 2:4-5, which reads: "But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)".

He listed other benefits of being a Christian as follows:

Christians are redeemed from sin.

Galatians 3:13 says Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.

Christians' are governed by the Holy Spirit.

As recorded in Acts 1:8, Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost will come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto uttermost parts of the earth.

Christians proclaim and showcase the light of the gospel.

He cited Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father, which is in heaven.

Christians are sanctified; they don't live any how life

Hebrews 10:10 says: We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 1 Corinthians.

Christians are entitled to purposeful callings

1 Peter 2:9 says: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes our body the temple of God.

It is by walking in the spirit that we have victory over the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life. 1 John 2:16-17.

He encouraged all believers to long after holiness, pray for it, even struggle for it with the deepest yearnings of the heart.

In addition, he asked then to have a life style that is pleasing unto God.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of father in my name, he may give it you (John 15:16)

O moyelu also admonished the church to imbibe the good habit of giving. "One of the major ways to show forth His praises is in our generosity towards God's work and towards humanity. So, giving is an act of love and giving reluctantly does not attract God's blessing. Cheerful giving unlocks God's blessing on the giver. Real giving in the Church results from a committed and surrendered heart to God.

He said real giving is made possible in the following number of ways:

"Those who have a deep knowledge of God will give to support God's work with gladness.

"Where there is love, gift will flow. So, let's honour God with the best of our substances as we celebrate Fathers' Day and all Men's Harvest (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)"

He said being treasured and holy people of God, Christians must know His will, which demands:

1. Pursuing a deeper relationship with God on a daily basis.
2. Taking on Christ's character
3. Being holy, morally pure and spiritually whole
4. Being dedicated to God's purpose and His will
5. Living in a way that makes you distinct and different from unbelievers.

"Your callings as fathers and Christians make you special. So do not fail God, you must be upright in all your doings and dealings, do God's will always, and make God proud," he said.

Quintessential journalist, Odukamaiya, marks 90

By PAULINE OGHENEKARO

Prince Henry Olukayode Odukamaiya, a quintessential journalist, celebrated his 90th birthday on July 14, 2024 with a thanksgiving service at Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC).

Odukamaiya was born on July 10, 1934 to the late Pa Nathaniel Adeniyi Odukamaiya and late Mama Abigail Alaba Odukamaiya from Ibefun in Ogun State.

The Prince, who served as the Chairman of the Publications Committee and Editor-in-Chief of the Christian Outlook magazine, for a remarkable period of 16 years, will always be remembered when writing the history of the church.

He is not just a journalist, he towered across the entire journalism spectrum, serving as a training manager, features editor at the Daily Times; foundation managing director and editor-in-chief at the Concord Group of Newspapers; and thereafter, Champion Newspapers.

He is happily married to his delectable and amiable heartthrob, Lydia Dola Odukamaiya, nee Tominiyi, with many children and grandchildren surrounding their table.

The current Chairman and Editor-in-Chief, Mr Dare Babarinsa, and members of the AVMCC Publications Committee join the family, friends and associates to wish Prince Henry Olukayode Odukamaiya 90 hearty cheers.

Meet new AVMCC resident organist

Muyiwa Olagoke James hails from Osogbo, Osun State. He is an alumnus of Obafemi Awolowo University. He holds a diploma in journalism from the International Institute of Journalism, Abuja. Prior to assuming the role of Resident Organist at Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC) in Ikeja, Lagos State, Muyiwa served as the organist and Choir master at Cathedral Church of Christ in Ilaro, Ogun State.

He has also held positions at St Stephen's in Oke-Aluko, Ondo State; Cathedral Church of Christ in Ona-Nla, Ilaro; Osun Diocesan School of Church Music; Olive Branches School in Osogbo; Ipadeola Bolaji Model College, and Bishop's Court in Ilaro. His job responsibilities primarily involve inter-relationship and leadership skills.

Muyiwa's passion for musical instruments since childhood led him to pursue a career as an organist. He is happily married and is blessed with children.

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Children

Practise what you teach, child preacher tells parents

Stories by MARY AWOWEDE

Parents have been told to practise what they teach their children in their homes as it is one sure way they can truly impact their upbringing.

The preacher, Master Ekene Ofulue, gave the advice while delivering a sermon at this year's 7 a.m. children harvest thanksgiving service.

Speaking on the topic: 'Shepherding God's Flock Today,' Ekene noted that many children would look up to their parents as role models.

According to him, since children are the first persons children interact with in life, their influence goes a long way in shaping the child in the future.

"As parents, you need to lead by example. You must learn to practise what you preach because children look up to you as their role models," he stated.

The young preacher cited a typical example of some parents who would tell their children not to tell lies, but were fond of telling lies.

He gave an example of a parent, who received a phone call in the presence of his child and told the caller he was not at home and that he had travelled, saying the child knew he had told a lie since he was at home.

Citing 1Peter 5: 1-11, Ekene started his preaching by defining a shepherd as “someone who cares for a group of people by guiding and directing them; and the flock “as God's people.”

According to him, the task of leading the people of God in today's world is very demanding and challenging and should not be left to priests alone because the times are evil and the devil is manipulating a lot of people; especially the children and the young adults to commit a lot of havoc. It is precisely because of these evils going on around us that the young preacher insisted that parents could not afford to rest on their oars.

He warned parents, saying: “If you cause your children directly or indirectly to sin, there's a lot of punishment waiting for you from God.”

In order to be good shepherds to their children (flocks), Ekene stressed the following for parents:

- 1) They must be deeply rooted in the word of God.
- 2) They must diligently study the bible “in order to teach the children and correct them well,” adding that: “it is by studying the Bible that you will know what to teach them and you will not teach them the wrong things.”
- 3) They must be selfless to love God's sheep (people) as they love themselves just like the Prophet Nehemiah, who devoted his time to lead God's people aright in his time.
- 4) They must ask for grace from God because we all need His grace “to be faithful to endure and lead well.”

Some of the benefits of leading God's flock highlighted by the young preacher include:

The chief shepherd will receive a crown of glory 1Peter 5: 4.

We will become more like Jesus Christ.

We will get closer to making heaven.

He observed that the greatest disadvantage of not shepherding the flock well according to Ezekiel 34:16 will result in extreme consequences. This, he explained, is because “when we fail to look after God's flock, we will end up losing them to the world and losing them to sin and that will be disastrous for all of us. So, we need to ask God for grace to live right so that in the end, we will be rewarded and be blessed.”

In his conclusion, Ekene prayed for God's word to accomplish its purpose in our lives in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Master Ademide Olukunle, his counterpart in the 10am service also preached along the same lines.

Harvest quiz winners

This year's 2024 Children Harvest Quiz competition was based on the book of Nehemiah, chapters 1-6.

As usual, participating children were made to read and study the six chapters ahead of the competition.

The event took place on Saturday, July 27, 2024 as one of the activities outlined for the Fun Day, organised by The Fountain of Hope society, the host for this year's harvest.

Five Sunday School teachers coordinated the quiz activity. They are Sisters Shade Oyebanji, Dayo Oyeniyi, Chinelo Emenike, Funmi Gbadeyan and Evelyn Umukoro.

According to Sister Evelyn Umukoro, the competition was divided into two categories. The first category was for ages 8-11 years comprising primary and JSS 1 & 2 students while the second category was composed of teens from JSS 3 and SS1 to 3, respectively.

At the end of the competition, six winners emerged. The winners are:

Ages 8-11 category

1st: Eriobu Chiamaka

2nd: Nnebedum Chimamanda

3rd: Okechukwu Nmeoma.
Teens category
1 st: Ezearigo Ebubechukeu Wisdom
2nd: Ofulue Otito
3rd: Ofulue Ekene.

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INTERVIEW

Rotating Sunday School teachers across classes achieving desired result — Deputy Coordinator, Owolabi

Mrs Folake Owolabi is the Deputy Coordinator of Sunday School at Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC). In this interview, she talks about innovations and changes introduced to the Sunday School, saying they are aimed at strengthening and equipping teachers and making them more effective and impactful. She spoke with our correspondent, GODWIN OFULUE.

Tell us briefly about yourself; when you joined the AVMCC Sunday School as a teacher.

My name is Mrs Folake Olusola Owolabi. I joined the Sunday School of Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral in 2002 as a teacher and today I am the Deputy Coordinator.

When did you assume your current position?

I took up the role last year 2023.

Did you occupy any leadership positions before this current one?

No

Have you undergone any training to boost your ability to manage children and teachers as a Sunday School coordinator?

Yes, I went for Basic Children Evangelical Ministry (CEM) courses. I also participated in other regular trainings, workshops, and conferences organised for teachers in the diocese by the Sunday School Chaplaincy.

Besides child management training, do you have any other qualification?

I have a First Degree in Banking & Finance.

Do you belong to any other organisation in the church and do you hold leadership positions in those organisations?

I belong to Christian Mothers and I am the Secretary of the organisation.

What motivated you to join the children ministry?

I have passion for teaching, to add value to lives and I have special love for children.

What should be the right motivation for an aspiring Sunday School teacher?

An aspiring Sunday School teacher must have the zeal to impart lives as a critical basic requirement to keep doing the work despite challenges that might arise, like in any other vocations or callings.

How did you emerge as deputy coordinator?

I was nominated by the current Coordinator, Bro Seth A. Odeneye, and unanimously approved at the general meeting of Sunday School Teachers.

How did you feel on your appointment: Prepared, scared, inadequate?

I was not scared and I did not feel inadequate. Though the appointment was not expected, I trusted God to do His work.

What did you do immediately to brace for the task?

Like said, I accepted the appointment as a call to do more for God. I prayed and prayed more for strength, wisdom, understanding and grace to make impact.

Were there immediate challenges you faced on assumption of office and how did you tackle them?
There was no challenge per se because of the ready support of my colleagues in the Sunday School.
You recently introduced a roster to rotate Sunday School teachers across various classes, periodically.
What informed this?

Yes, a roster was introduced to rotate teachers periodically as part of the strategy to improve on the standard on ground. The rotation is expected to eliminate monotonous experience by teachers and pupils, and to ensure teachers are not stereotyped, but robust in their teaching skills, and impart the children of different age brackets. It is also meant to facilitate ease of succession in the leadership ladder of the Sunday School by making teachers go through the processes.

How are teachers responding to the innovation?

Change is dynamic and comes with level of resistance in every organisation because it challenges status quo. But I can tell you that teachers and children are adjusting gradually to the new development that will surely bring great benefits to all the parties concerned in the long run.

How would you measure the impact so far?

The change took off in the month of May this year.

One of the sub units in Sunday School, the Training & Manpower Development unit, will be administering questionnaires soon to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of this change in the first three months and findings will come with corrective measures.

Are we to expect other changes soon?

Other changes will be introduced as the case demands for the betterment of the ministry and the spiritual growth of the children.

Do you have any message for parents concerning the need to send their children to Sunday School?

I will like to thank parents that have been sending their children/wards to the Sunday School every Sunday and also with the 3Bs (Bible, Book, Biro).

However, to the parents that take their children to the adult church, I appeal to them to please bring them to Sunday School to be nurtured, taught the word of God and the church's order of worship as appropriate and expedient for their age. May the Lord take care of our children Himself, in Jesus name.

Besides caring for children, do you have any other profession?

I worked with Union Bank Nig Plc for over 12 years (as a Suspense Retiree) as we were called then. Then I joined Wema Securities & Finance Plc (Subsidiary of Wema Bank Plc) for another eight years before I retired.

Did you occupy any leadership positions as a banker?

I was privileged to occupy some leadership positions in my career path as professional banker, trainer, HR in the banking industry.

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I'll continue to support children choir despite retirement — Pioneer Choir Mistress, Awokoya

The pioneer Sunday School choir mistress of Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC), Mrs Arinola Iyabo Awokoya, who retired recently, has promised to continue the sponsorship of Carol Festival of Nine Lessons and some other activities of the choir. She made the pledge in this interview with MARY AWOWEDE.

When did you join the Sunday school?

I joined Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC) Sunday School in September 2006.

What motivated you?

When I started attending AVMCC (before it attained the Diocese status), anytime children from the Sunday School made a presentation during Mothers or Fathers' Day, I used to feel uncomfortable about their presentations as they always seemed uninspiring to me. I used to think: "These children can do better than they are doing." This bothered me in my subconscious a lot.

But the push to become a Sunday School teacher came from outside Vining. I was having a conversation with a colleague on churches, and he asked me the area of service I participated in my church. I told him Vicar's Society and explained to him that it was a joke about an imaginary society for those who did not belong to any church society.

He berated me, saying everyone was supposed to be working in God's Vineyard and that being a bench warmer in church was not a service to God. Then I started to weigh my choices. My God-given gift has always been music. I also did study music to a passable extent in secondary school and had good knowledge of both the piano and the guitar, and I was in a gospel band (The High Praise Band) when I finished university education.

I decided that I would join the church main choir, but still felt not quite settled about it. Then after service one Sunday, on our way to the car park, my husband and I came across the late Colonel Keshi and he said to me, "Arin, we need you in Sunday School" and I hastily told him, "Colonel, I am travelling for the summer holidays, when I get back, I will come and see you," hoping to escape. But God is God and His purposes are always accomplished. Lo! the first Sunday, after we returned to Nigeria and we attended service, Colonel Keshi was standing in front of the Sunday School as we were walking to the main church. There and then, the Lord convicted me of my sin of running from service and I told my husband that I wanted to go to the Sunday School to observe the service. The rest is history as they say. I stayed in Sunday School from 2006 to 2024.

What motivated you to form the children's choir?

There is something so beautiful and unique about children's voices, so innocent and pure and usually so crisp. Children reach the cadence and notes of music almost effortlessly.

I was in my secondary school choir (St Louis, Ibadan) and we used to be featured on NTA during Easter and Christmas. It was a beautiful experience, which I wanted to re-create through the AVMCC children choir, but the most compelling reason was the desire to give the children opportunity to serve God at a young age because God called children to serve as prophets, servants, or leaders in the Bible.

The examples of Samuel, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, and his friends are there with the story of Samuel being particularly noteworthy. So, children could see it as a call of honour.

Finally, music teaches discipline and is also a brain energiser. Learning to read notes, singing in parts, appreciating classical music, hymns and adding contemporary music all meant that the Anglican church would build membership succession.

As children learn to love all the best of the Anglican church, they would remain in the church. At the time I joined the Sunday School, the orthodox churches were losing membership to the Pentecostals. I wanted to be part of stemming that tide.

What were your initial challenges and how did you scale the hurdles?

First, we did not have a choirmaster. How could we when we did not even have an organ or keyboard? The first thing I did was to buy a keyboard and then approach the big church to ask that they provide us with an organist. I must commend Rev. Kola Layiwola greatly. He was then our Assistant Coordinator, as Col. Keshi had signified an intention to retire to the village. Rev. Layiwola was a practical bull-doze force in helping me to navigate the Big Church administration. (Sorry, in Sunday School, we call the cathedral the Big Church). I harassed Mr. Sunday Olawuwo and he agreed to roster organists to us. That did not work well.

We needed a permanent organist if we were to develop. So, I had to look outside our diocese. Mr. Femi Williams I had known on a personal note, and I approached him to leave the Cathedral Church of Christ, where he was, to join us in AVMCC and be our choirmaster. Thank God for helpers like Mr Femi Olutayo,

who took up the payment of his salary for over six months before the Big Church finally took over from him.

The second challenge was how to make the Children's Choir legally an organ of the cathedral. We were blessed at that time to have the late Venerable Olu Oshewa as the Dean of the Cathedral. He was enthused by the idea of a Children Choir for the Cathedral, and he moved all powers to inaugurate the choir during the Children's Harvest 2007.

The robes for the inauguration were donated by Mr. Femi Olutayo and he continued to support the children choir with more robes as the choir expanded.

Mr Femi Williams became the choirmaster, while I became the Children Choir Co-ordinator.

For years, you sponsored the annual Sunday School Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. At retirement, will you continue to sponsor the event?

I will continue to do so.

You are a silent philanthropist, but do not like it publicised. You have been sponsoring university education of some of the choir children. Will you continue doing that?

My guiding principle on giving is Matthew 6:2; which says: "So, when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full." Please, permit me to remain silent on my philanthropy.

What would consider your greatest achievement as a choir mistress?

I am proud of the birth of the Children's Choir of the AVMCC Cathedral. I believe the Youth Choir came after the Children's Choir. I am proud of the fact that the children love classical music. We made it a point of duty to let them learn a lot of the compositions of Handel's Messiah. I am also proud that at one time during Ven Oshewa, we registered about eight children for MUSON (Musical Society of Nigeria) exams in theory and practical (Voice singing) and they all passed. Tochineke Daniela Oji (now Mrs Amobi) scored a distinction then along with Chioma Ibekwe. And then, the Church paid for the enrolment. We did this for two years, but, sadly, we did not have the same synergy with other heads of the cathedral or perhaps I did not push a bit more like at the beginning.

Another success is that we raised and continued to raise instrumentalists both male and female and we transferred them to the Big Church after they finished in the Sunday school and Youth Chapel. Among them were Sijibomi Alofe, Pamilerin Adekoya.

Sunday School is scouting for replacement. Why did you not groom someone to replace you so that there could be smooth transition/take over from you?

It was difficult to groom anyone to take over my role and I did try so much to find such a person. Let us try to understand my role. I founded the children choir, so it was my God-given vision, and I was thus spiritually, emotionally and financially committed to the growth and development of the choir. I was a resource provider. Every summer when I travelled, I hunted for classical music compositions that the children could learn both ancient and contemporary. I bought books, instruments, even acting props. I planned our activities yearly ahead and gave to the choirmaster to prepare to teach. I taught the children Bible lessons as their Sunday School teacher so that I was at the service every Sunday. We would teach for 1 hour from 8 to 9 and then switch to choir practice for about 45 minutes. I was committed to all the children individually and often took them out to concerts or musicals at the MUSON centre with their parents' permission. I also had weekend visits with them. So, to replicate me, we must find someone with music knowledge and interest and willingness to put the finances into the Sunday School.

But I agonised about the successor part though and prepared two teachers, who the coordinator seconded to the choir class. Since we have Mr. Femi Williams, who is the choirmaster, the music training would not be affected, so a class teacher could teach the choir class and control them during choir practice.

One of my successors relocated abroad, but there is one more teacher left. The person needed as the church looks for a successor is someone who understands music and also has the interest. I would suggest looking at the first sets of the graduates from Children Choir, who are still in Nigeria. They can act as resource persons to Mr. Femi Williams; then the church can appoint a matron for the children's choir, who can draw resources to the choir.

Don't you have any specific person you can recommend to take over from you?

Unfortunately, I don't. The only person that comes to mind is a chorister in the Big Church choir. The question is: Do we really need to replace me? If the Cathedral choirmaster focuses on seeing the three levels of choirs (Big, Youth and Children) as his domain, he can always supervise the choirmasters by providing a yearly holistic plan/target that all the choirs must follow and then leave them with the respective choirmasters to implement along with the unique forms of worship in the three tiers. I suggested this with Mr. Sunday Olawuwo, but it did not work out very well. You see, the three choirs should have times when they sing together as a mass choir at Easter and at Christmas and at choir festivals.

The Cathedral choirmaster should plan these. There is this lack of nexus in the music department of the church, and it means that we are not harnessing all our resources for maximum productivity.

As you exit the Sunday school, what say is the major legacy you are leaving behind?

I believe my legacies are with the children that I thought and they are now up to 150 and perhaps more. Some are married and have children. The greatest joy is when I have them coming back to say hello to us at the Sunday School when they are back in Nigeria on holidays and not just the girls, the boys also. I also like it very much that I did not lose any of them to the world. They are all still within the Christian fold.

Looking into the future, say 10 years from now, where would you like the children's choir to be?

I want a system in which children choristers naturally move to the Youth Choir and then to the Big Church choir fluidly, and this should be made possible by the church administration.

The children's choir does not graduate more than six children on the average yearly; so I do not see any reason why this number cannot be absorbed into the Youth choir. I quite appreciate that the Youth Choir has a different style (the Children choir is more of the classical Big Church orientation, by design, to ground them in Anglicanism), but when they are at the age when they can fit into the more modern worship style of the Youth Church, and naturally, they should go to the Big Church choir when they are back from university. That way, the children advance their skills and remain in the church.

In 10 years, I expect that that system is fully in place and also that it becomes compulsory for the church to enrol the children choristers for MUSON music and voice exams. When children are made to acquire certificates by examinations, they are more driven to achieve.

Would it be safe to assume you would be playing the role of a matron to Sunday school?

Not really, except mandated by the Diocesan or the Dean. I see myself performing another role in the church and I am working on a presentation to the Diocesan on that. I am however submissive to the Holy Spirit as regards where He would have me serve in future.

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EDUCATION

Procession of the Elements

By EBENEZER ADEWOLE

The procession of the elements at a communion service is a significant part of many Christian religious ceremonies.

It typically involves the preparation and presentation of bread and wine as symbols of the body and blood of Christ.

During the procession, the elements are typically carried in a ceremonial manner by religious officials or other appointed persons, while hymns or prayers may be sung.

The procession symbolises the coming together of the community to partake in the sacrament of communion, which is a central rite in many Christian traditions.

The procession of the elements at a communion service symbolises several important aspects of the Christian faith and the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper. Here are a few key symbolic meanings:

1.) Unity: The procession symbolises the unity of the community of believers in partaking of the sacrament together.

It emphasises the idea that Christians are one body, unified in their faith in Christ.

2. Reverence: The procession is a solemn and reverent act that reflects the sacred nature of the Eucharist. It demonstrates respect and honour for the body and blood of Christ that are symbolically present in the bread and wine.

3. Sacrifice and Redemption: The act of carrying the elements in procession recalls Christ's sacrifice on the cross and his redemptive work for humanity. It is a visual representation of the offering of Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

4. Connection with tradition: The procession is a link to centuries of Christian tradition and the practices of early Christian communities. It connects present-day believers with the rituals and symbolism that have been central to Christian worship for generations.

Overall, the procession of the elements at a communion service serves to deepen the spiritual experience of participants, reminding them of the central aspects of Christian faith and providing a tangible connection to the sacred mysteries of the Eucharist.

*Thanks to the Dean, Venerable Ebenezer Adewole, for the expository article on the Procession of the Element. A survey by Christian Outlook had indicated that not many understood the essence of the procession. The Dean was approached for explanation, and he provided answers in the article above.

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Be Inspired

Dare to Be Different

In a world where conformity is often the norm, the call to stand out and be different is both a challenge and an opportunity. The Bible offers numerous examples of individuals who dared to be different and were used mightily by God. Today, we are also encouraged to live distinctively, shining as lights in a world that needs hope and direction.

I shall share my thoughts on the concept of daring to be different, drawing on biblical narratives and contemporary examples to inspire readers to embrace their unique calling.

1. Biblical foundation: Daniel and his friends

The story of Daniel and his friends in the Book of Daniel is a profound example of daring to be different. Taken captive to Babylon, they were immersed in a culture that was foreign and often opposed to their

beliefs. Yet, Daniel and his friends resolved not to defile themselves with the king's food and wine (Daniel 1:8).

Their commitment to their faith set them apart and God honoured their decision. Daniel's interpretation of dreams, his unwavering prayer life, and his experience in the lion's den all underscore the blessings that come from standing firm in one's faith.

2. Jesus: The ultimate example

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of daring to be different. He challenged the religious norms of His time, showed compassion to the marginalised, and introduced a radical new way of understanding God's Kingdom.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is a manifesto for living differently, advocating for love, humility, and mercy. His life, death, and resurrection exemplify the transformative power of a life lived in obedience to God, regardless of societal expectations.

3. Modern-day heroes: Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King Jr.

Contemporary history also offers examples of individuals who dared to be different. These two, have been my modern-day heroes! Mother Teresa dedicated her life to serving the poor in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India, showing that love and compassion transcend cultural and religious boundaries.

Her unwavering commitment to her mission, despite numerous challenges, inspired millions around the world. Similarly, Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States exemplified daring to be different in the pursuit of justice and equality. His famous "I Have a Dream" speech continues to inspire generations to fight against injustice.

4. Personal application: Living distinctively today

In our daily lives, daring to be different can manifest in various ways. It might mean standing up for what is right in the workplace, showing kindness to those who are overlooked, or maintaining integrity in situations where it is easier to compromise. Romans 12:2 encourages us: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

By aligning our thoughts and actions with God's will, we can live distinctively and make a positive impact on those around us.

5. Overcoming the fear of standing out

One of the biggest obstacles to daring to be different is the fear of standing out or being criticised. However, 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Embracing this truth empowers us to face challenges with courage and conviction. It is also helpful to remember that we are never alone; God is with us, and He has placed us in a community of believers who can support and encourage us.

Conclusion: Embrace your unique calling

Daring to be different is not about being rebellious or contrarian for its own sake; it is about living out the unique calling that God has placed on each of our lives. It requires courage, faith, and a willingness to trust God's plan even when it leads us against the current of societal norms.

As we seek to follow the examples of biblical figures and modern-day heroes, let us be inspired to live boldly and distinctively, knowing that in doing so, we glorify God and bring light to the world.

Attack on Israel another reminder of end times, says Rt. Rev. Prof. Asaju

The Rt. Rev. Prof. Dapo Folorunso Asaju has said the current attack on Israel is a further pointer to the end times. He, however, warned, quoting Jesus Christ, that the people should not be alarmed by wars and rumours of war. His position is contained in a lecture he delivered in March 2024, at the Believers Mentoring Mission's 2024 Conference at the Mission's Light House Training Centre at Ogudu GRA Phase 2. Below, his thoughts

Conflict in Israel has been a constant reality since the nation was settled on the Promised Land. Israel periodically experienced attacks and wars from Egyptians, Canaanites, Amalekites, Midianites, Moabites, Ammonites, Amorites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Romans. The nation of Israel has always been persecuted by its neighbours. This is because, spiritually speaking, God specially chose Israel, loved and nursed the people to achieve His ultimate plan of salvation of mankind, which will ultimately defeat the power and reign of Satan, since the fall of Adam. Satan wants to defeat the plan of God, hence his instigation of several enemies, who sought and still seek the total and physical destruction of Israel, as well as the religions that emerge from the Abrahamic covenant, namely Judaism and Christianity. This same antagonism informed the series of events that led to the crucifixion of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. But it was a huge mistake made by Satan, because the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross was the ultimate goal of the Almighty God to pay the price of death, which man owed after Adam's fall, and to defeat as well as restore to mankind, Satan's usurpation of Adam's power to rule over the world.

Satanically influenced hatred of Israel is the reason Israel's neighbours have always wanted to see Israel destroyed. Whether it is Sennacherib, king of Assyria; Haman, official of Persia; Hitler, leader of Nazi Germany; or Rouhani, President of Iran, attempts to completely destroy Israel will always fail.

The persecutors of Israel will come and go, but the persecution will remain until the second coming of Christ. As a result, conflict in Israel is just one of the indicators, but not the main one, of the soon arrival of the end times.

The Bible predicted that there will be terrible conflict in Israel during the end times. That is why the time period is known as the Tribulation, the Great Tribulation, and the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7).

The following predictions about Israel are found in the Bible:

There will be a mass return of Jews to the land of Israel (Deuteronomy 30:3; Isaiah 43:6; Ezekiel 34:11-13; 36:24; 37:1-14).

The antichrist will make a seven-year covenant of "peace" with Israel (Isaiah 28:18; Daniel 9:27).

The temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 11:1).

The antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, and worldwide persecution of Israel will result (Daniel 9:27; 12:1, 11; Zechariah 11:16; Matthew 24:15, 21; Revelation 12:13). Israel will be invaded (Ezekiel chapters 38-39).

Israel will finally recognise Jesus as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). Israel will be regenerated, restored and re-gathered (Jeremiah 33:8; Ezekiel 11:17; Romans 11:26).

The Babylonian captivity of Israel, which was confined to one area, was obviously not the international diaspora to all nations. The diaspora only occurred in the first century AD, and was finally announced by Jesus after He was rejected as Messiah by Israel. Prior to and in His prophetic discourse (Matt. 23 and 24), He told the apostate religious leaders that they were filling up the measure of their fathers' sins, and that Jerusalem would be destroyed as a result. In Luke 21, He indicated that the dispersion of Israel would continue for a long period during the times of the Gentiles: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near... For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled... For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon

this (Israeli) people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-24).

The siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 was the start of the long international dispersion of Israel that lasted for almost two millennia. At some time during the diaspora, there were Jewish exiles in all countries of the world.

There is much turmoil in Israel today. Israel is persecuted, surrounded by enemies—Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, etc. But this hatred and persecution of Israel is only a hint of what will happen in the end times (Matthew 24:15-21).

The latest round of persecution began when Israel was reconstituted as a nation in 1948. Many Bible prophecy scholars believed the six-day Arab-Israeli war in 1967 was the "beginning of the end." Could what is taking place in Israel today indicate that the end is near? Yes. Does it necessarily mean the end is near? No. Jesus Himself said it best, "Watch out that no one deceives you. . . . You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come" (Matthew 24:4-6).

God Himself was, and still is, the guarantor of the Abrahamic (Gen. 15:18), Canaanitic (Num. 33:51–34:15) and Davidic (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89:3-4, 34-37) covenants that ensure the eternal allocation of the land as well as the permanence of David's throne. Israel's exile from the land because of disobedience cannot invalidate these covenants. Even if Israel is unfaithful, God remains a faithful covenant-keeping God who will again restore the nation to their land.

A solemn assurance to this effect was given long before the Babylonian captivity and the international diaspora: "Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord" (Lev. 26:44-45).

The partial gathering of Israel from their international exile is a physical restoration to the land of their fathers,

The final objective with this process is their spiritual revival from the apostate condition into which they have lapsed: "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God... I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and... I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep my judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:22-28).

A spiritual cleansing must occur after Israel has been restored to their land. It will coincide with great distress and tribulation. God says that He will refine the remnant of Israel in the fire of His wrath (Zech. 13:9). Jeremiah also refers to this time when he said: "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7). This time of trouble is the coming great tribulation when Israel will call on God for mercy and help: "In their affliction they will diligently seek me" (Hos. 5:15).

The restoration of Israel occurs progressively: they are first physically and politically restored as a nation, but in the same spiritually blinded state that prevailed during their dispersion. Back in the land, God will allow a great tribulation upon them from which a remnant will be saved (Rom. 9:27). "Therefore thus says the Lord God: because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt it; so will I gather you in my anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there and melt you... then you shall know that I, the Lord, have poured out my fury on you" (Ezek. 22:19-22). The Jews are restored to their land to be spiritually purified.

The status of the city of Jerusalem is a very significant indication of the progressive physical restoration of Israel, and of the end of the times of the Gentiles.

In Luke 21:24, the Lord Jesus said Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. The end-time restoration of Jerusalem is therefore an important parameter for the revival of the Jewish nation, while it also indicates the end of the church dispensation. It is not a sudden and quickly passing sign which leaves one no time to react to it, but a gradual process. The various phases of this process can be distinguished as follows:

In 1948, with the declaration of Israel as an independent Jewish state, the Jews only controlled the new, western part of Jerusalem. The old city and the Temple Mount were at that time still under Jordanian control.

In 1967, in the Six Day War, Israel gained control over the whole of Jerusalem, and also over the West Bank, the Golan Heights and other areas. At that stage, Jerusalem was physically restored and its Jewish population entered a phase of rapid increase.

In 1980, Jerusalem was declared the eternal, undivided capital of Israel, and the Prime Minister moved his office from Tel Aviv to Yerushalayim, the city of destiny. During the next two years, all his cabinet members were relocated. At that stage, the constitutional restoration of the city was complete. Its physical and political trampling was now over.

After 1980, the spiritual trampling of Jerusalem still continued. Three Muslim mosques are on the Temple Mount, and this area is under the control of an Islamic committee, the Wakf.

According to biblical prophecies, the orthodox faith of Israel will strongly revive and the temple will also be rebuilt. This initiative will coincide with the continued rejection of the once for all sacrifice of Jesus as the true Messiah of Israel (Heb. 10:10).

The rebuilt temple will be desecrated by the false messiah (Antichrist). When Israel revokes their covenant with him, they will be driven out of the city. It will only be at the coming of the true Messiah to the Mount of Olives, that Jerusalem and the remnant of Israel will be spiritually restored. Several important events will occur before this time, most of which will form part of the coming tribulation period

With the present restoration of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, we are now very close to the end of the church age: "Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). We are now living in the period of Jerusalem's and Israel's progressive restoration, so the last year of Israel's divine history may soon commence.

Israel will enter into a covenant with the false messiah (Antichrist). Daniel 9:27 reads: "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week." The false messiah will appear on the scene as a diplomat and peacemaker.

The Antichrist will be endowed with all of Satan's powers of deception (Rev. 12:9; 13:2), and will use these powers to perform astounding "signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9) to deceive Israel and the nations into concluding the above-mentioned covenant with him. His success as peacemaker in the Middle East will form a springboard from which he will rise to power in the Mediterranean alliance of the revived Roman Empire. All countries will eventually become signatories of the peace treaties of the false messiah, and he will use the Mediterranean alliance to become the undisputed peacemaker and global leader. His success and diplomatic skills will deceive nearly everyone. At that stage, few people would dare to allege that he is involved in the greatest deception of all time, and that he would, within a few years, become the worst dictator in the entire history of the world!

Most of the Jews will be influenced by these highly dramatic events and will be quick to accept this man as their messiah. He will probably use a false genealogy, which will lead them to believe that he is indeed a descendant of King David and a member of the tribe of Judah. The Lord Jesus warned the Jews against this fatal mistake: "I have come in My Father's Name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive" (John 5:43).

The false messiah will introduce a world-wide peace and unity, and encourage the Jews to rebuild the temple. This will render him a national hero in Israel. Soon he will also become the hero of all the nations of the world by presenting himself as their common messiah. He will pretend to be the Messiah to the Jews, the Christ to the Christians, the Imam Mahdi to the Muslims, Krishna to the Hindus and the Maitreya Buddha to the Buddhists.

After the sensational revelation of the universally accepted world leader, posing, like Satan, as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), at the start of the seven year period there will be a revival in Israel with 144,000 Jews accepting Jesus as the true Messiah. They will openly declare that the man officially recognised as Messiah by the Israeli government is a false messiah. This revelation will cause great consternation and tension in Israel and immediately lead to the persecution of all who refuse to worship the false messiah. Halfway through the seven year period, the whole world will be shocked out of the false sense of peace that it has enjoyed for three and a half years: "For when they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3).

Israel will be greatly disillusioned when they realise that they have been worshipping a false messiah, who pretends to be God Himself. They will immediately revoke their covenant with him. The false messiah will then forbid them to sacrifice in the name of God, and instead erect a statue of himself in the Holy of holies in the newly built temple in Jerusalem, and demand worship: "...and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and offering to cease (for the remaining three and one-half years); and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate; until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator" (Dan. 9:27 Amplified Bible). The false messiah will then be revealed as a ruthless dictator.

As in World War II, genocide will be perpetrated against the Jews during the second half of the tribulation – in that three and half years period, known as the "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21) or "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). Jesus Christ described this time of terror in His prophetic discourse: "Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains... For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt. 24:15-21).

Daniel also refers to the dark days of the coming tribulation period in his prophecies about the end-time: "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation" (Dan. 11:31).

When the covenant with Israel has been broken and the false messiah declares himself to be God, the Jews will flee to a place of refuge. Then 42 months (1 260 days) will elapse before the true Messiah descends to the Mount of Olives. As this moment draws near, surviving Jews will return to Jerusalem, determined to be at the Mount of Olives by the Day of Atonement, to meet their Messiah. It will be an extremely dangerous time for them, as the false messiah will still endeavour to kill all the Jews he can find. At this stage, there will be a powerful multi-national force in Israel. They will be under the command of the false messiah and the false prophet, and deployed to surround Jerusalem. Their objectives will be to annihilate Israel and to kill the coming Messiah (Zech. 14:2-3; Rev. 19:19-20).

The Jews, who return to Jerusalem, to await the Messiah will need to be deeply convinced that He really is about to come, as their journey and approach to the city will be fraught with dangers.

The enemy will be all around them, and a heavily armed military force will be closing in upon them with every passing minute. Many houses will be plundered in Jerusalem as the invaders start demolishing the city. People will flee to the Mount of Olives in panic. Some of them will even lose hope completely and say: "Our hope is lost: we are cut off" (Ezek. 37:11).

When the false messiah is about to cut off and kill the remnant of Israel, the dramatic event of the Second Coming of the Messiah will occur. Prophet Zechariah describes the momentous events of that

day: "For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem ... Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall split in two, from east to west, making a very big valley; half of the mountain shall move towards the north and half of it towards the south. Then you shall flee through my mountain valley ... thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You... And the Lord shall be King over all the earth... And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths. It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the Lord will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbour, and raise his hand against his neighbour's hand" (Zech. 14:2-13). At this critical moment when the wrath of God is poured out upon a sinful world, mercy and grace will still be offered by Jesus to the remaining Jews who put their trust in Him and hope for His salvation. When the dark clouds of judgment engulf Jerusalem and its surroundings, the remaining Jews will flee into the place of refuge caused by the sudden cleaving of the mountain. There, literally at the feet of Jesus, they will be safe. Great confusion will prevail among their enemies who will start killing one another. The Lord says: "It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a first-born" (Zech. 12:9-10).

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MUSIC

I joined Anglican Church for love of music — Sowunmi

He has an engineering background. In music, he is self-made. He had to cross hurdles, refusing to be discouraged by taunts against his determination to master the art of music. And today, he is the Master of Music at Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral, Ikeja, Lagos. He is Dr Samuel Sowunmi. He tells his story in this interview with GODWIN OFULUE

Kindly and briefly tell us about your background: Your place of birth, your parents and growing up years. I was born in Zaria (in Kaduna State) to Mr. Simeon Sowunmi and Mrs. Victoria Sowunmi. My father died in July 1969 while my mother is advanced in age. She turned 101 this year. I had my primary education at St. George's Primary (a school owned by Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) and secondary education at Government College Katsina. I spent a great part of my life (nearly four decades) in Zaria before relocating to Lagos. Growing up in the north was quite memorable.

Tell us about your higher education

I did my A Levels at College of Science and Technology Zaria from 1979 to 1981. I studied chemical engineering at Ahmadu Bello University and obtained, B. Eng, M. Sc, and Ph.D. degrees, all in Chemical Engineering.

My doctoral research work was fully sponsored by the Forest Products Laboratory of the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

On my return from Madison WI, I continued lecturing at the Department of Chemical Engineering, A.B.U. Zaria till Year 2000 when I left the academia to practise chemical engineering until I finally retired in 2022.

At what point did you develop interest in music? Who or what influenced you? Is it in the family or did the inspiration come from outside the family?

I was born into United Native African Church (now First African Church Mission), Ebenezer Parish in Zaria and joined the choir of the church in September 1970. The tune, Rippon, was used for my auditioning. Classical church music was not very strong in the church then (all hymns were sung in unison by both congregation and choir). I continued as a member of the church choir until after my first degree.

After my NYSC in 1986, I came to Lagos in search of job and for the first time stumbled on an organist (a young lad, probably just out of secondary) playing from musical notes (which looked more like Arabic inscription to me then).

I was fascinated by the skill of this young man and the harmonious sound coming from the organ. I approached the young lad to explore the possibility of being taught music by the boy, but I was ridiculed by the young organist.

Fortunately, for me, I am not one who gives up on a venture once my sight is set on it. I set out to look for books that can help me in my self-effort to learn music and so I started my journey to teach myself music. After a few months of job searching interspersed with music self-learning, I interpreted my first music, and the name of the tune is St. Thomas.

I went back to Zaria to start my Masters degree program (in Chemical Engineering) and immersed myself in church music with newly found skill. Frustrated that my newfound mode of church music was neither appreciated nor supported by my church of birth, I left the church and joined The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion, St. George's parish) in 1989 where classical church music was embraced and since then my love for church music and service in the Lord's vineyard never dwindled.

You came to AVMCC as a Resident Organist; where were you before landing at AVMCC?

I did not come into AVMCC as a Resident Organist. I joined the AVMCC choir in late 2000 after relocating to Lagos from Zaria. In 2006, I went on an official foreign assignment from my workplace. I volunteered to assist the church organists upon my return in 2009 – a role that I played until my appointment as the Cathedral organist and Master of Music.

Educate us please on the functions and roles of a Resident Organist

The role of the organist resident in the church is to ensure coverage on the organ at all services of the church, especially those on short notices and also to assist the Cathedral organist and Master of Music in the administration of music in the church – but please note that I was not a resident organist before this present appointment.

You were recently elevated to the position of Master of Music. Kindly tell us what your roles are as a Master of Music

The Cathedral Organist and Master of Music is to perform his/her duties under the direction of the Dean of the Cathedral and therefore he is the link between the choir and Dean, and through the Dean to the Standing Committee.

He is also the head of the Choir and the Church Band.

Some other functions include ensuring performance of full fledged Orchestra/Choir at least twice a year. In a nutshell, the Master of Music is the administrative head of the music ministry, entrusted with the day-to-day running of the church choirs

What has the experience been since you took over the higher position of greater responsibility?

The journey has just begun. One of the major differences now is that I suddenly find myself in the limelight and things I normally would do in the past without putting careful thoughts to it have to stop. This is not just a group; it is a ministry in the Church God.

How would you describe the role of music in a church service?

The role of music in a church service cannot be overemphasised. Different people may have different opinions. I believe that we must first understand the Biblical values dictating the purpose of church worship for we to properly situate music in worship.

Like a writer once said: “The role of music is to serve the larger purposes of worship. In the context of church, music is a means to an end. Music is a valuable tool, a flexible vehicle, and a precious resource to enable people to worship God.” In worship, we communicate with God, either in prayer, praise/adoration and thanksgiving.

In communing with God, we edify ourselves and others and music is a vital tool in helping us to achieve this. I see four ways in which music helps in church service

Music helps us communicate emotionally with God. A writer describes music as unique in its tangible and intangible ability to connect deeply with the human soul. It is a wonderful and powerful means of communication and expression. When deployed theologically and artfully, worship music helps us focus on God. Hopefully without being distracted!

But a word of warning. Worship music is a created thing, and the creator does not dwell in the music. Music is the work of men's hands used to worship God.

Music in worship helps to create poetic words and emotive actions required in offering praises to the Almighty

Music affects our emotions and helps us to grow closer to God. I have found my emotion greatly affected by songs after reading the stories behind such songs – such is the power of music in worship.

Music can be used to inspire, encourage and unite the Church as a body of Christ.

My final submission is that the role and purpose of music in worship is biblical. Paul's words in Colossians 3:16 are straightforward: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

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HYMN REVIEW

A Time Like This

By OLORUNDA AKINWANDE

“An ideal commitment to God's work just as Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral is undertaking the rebuilding of the Cathedral worship.”

The Anglican Hymn, “A Time Like This” has become a frequent reminder sung during services in the cathedral, encouraging and reminding members about the need to participate in the task of rebuilding the cathedral.

It is a hymn that calls on selfless givers to contribute at will and at the right time.

The hymn shares similarity with another Hymn “In Times Like This,” but with different approaches and objectives.

The hymn, A Time Like This, is aimed at motivating voluntary givers to the work of God, while In Times Like This focuses on rescue that looks onto saving grace anchored by a healer.

A Time Like This is aimed at encouraging selfless contributions to a demanding project. Thus the emphasis is to encourage generous donors to give.

As a motivational hymn, it encourages members to freely give towards the building of a worship centre (AVMCC) of universal standard at a very short time despite the substantially high cost.

It reminds us that in this time, we have the opportunity to make a difference and contribute to the church.

The hymn emphasises the importance of unity, collaboration and active participation within the body of Christ.

In Ephesians 4:16, Apostle Paul speaks about how every part of the body has a role to play in the growth and building of the church.

It encourages us to embrace the current season of our lives and to be fully present in it.

It reminds us that God has a purpose for every stage we go through, and that there are unique blessings and lessons to be found in each moment.

The regular singing of the song in ACMCC is to remind members of their vows and responsibilities to work for God and to specifically make contributions to the project.

The Author

The hymn "A Time Like This" was composed in 2014 by Anglican Communion advocates for the then proposed Diocese of Mbaitoli, a town in Imo.

The Steering Committee and the Anglican

Christian faithful reaffirmed their commitment to the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion and the demand by Christians. They expressed their desire to establish a new Diocese of Mbaitoli and promised that the new Diocese would uphold the philosophy of the Church of Nigeria and contribute to its growth and development.

The Steering Committee emphasised her vision and mission in the song, that is, purposely to encourage and input others.

THE HYMN

Stanza 1

A time like this, God looks for men,
Worthy vessels that He will use;
To accomplish, His great purpose
And make His kingdom widely known.

This stanza emphasises that God's work must be done with assurance that He will look for the appropriate person who will sacrificially give all that is required to do His work. God looks for and chooses who to use like he did with Zerubbabel into a glorious timely and speedy completion.

Chorus

Lord here I am
Myself I give
My TALENT, TIME, SILVER & GOLD,
Father use me, to build your Church
To show your praise among all men.

The Chorus is about the volunteer, who declares his readiness to give his three Ts- Talent, Time and Treasure.

He does not only rest on his submission and pledge but he pleads with God to use him, knowing fully well that God will only use whosoever He wants, to do His work, especially the worship place just as the choice of Solomon for the Jerusalem Temple the building of which he rejected David, Solomon's father,

despite his (David) capability, preparedness and close and cordial relationship with God. God rejected his bid to build the temple and He categorically preferred and enabled David's son, Solomon to do so.

Stanza 2.

A time like this, Lord help me hear
Your thundering voice and do obey
Where some have failed, others abscond
Lord help me stand what'er the cost.

The volunteer did not only work on his submission of self to contribute to the building of the church but desired and prayed that God should talk to him loudly to make his soul hear, so that his contribution would be acceptable and to succeed where others had failed or were rejected. He concluded that by praying for adequate provision for him to succeed in his offerings.

Stanza 3.

A time like this, a warfare time
When champions rise, and others fall
Satan fights his final battles
Making the race so tough to run.

In stanza 3, the voluntary says champions and others fall and fail at battle field because of the intervention of the devil. The author/s and by extension the true Christian plead with God not to let him fall victim.

Stanza 4.

A time like this, I'll fix my eyes
On thee alone, lest I should fall
Living for thee, father of love
Until I end my journey home.

In verse 4, it is clear that there are diversionary powers that can cause diversion. At times of sacrificial service, it is common knowledge that there will be obstructions but the devoted needs to pray for observation and eyes to see and avoid falling asleep and becoming victim.

Haggai 2:8 reads: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty."

Whatever we give is a fraction of what God has allowed us to keep and use for His purposes. Why then does a Christian give grudgingly?

The chorus is a hint about offering part of one's resources (talent, time, silver, and gold) to God for the purpose of building His church and showing His praise among all men.

Just as we are taught that silver and gold belong to God, the hymn is about giving back unto God what is His and asking Him to use us and what we keep in custody for Him as He wishes.

In essence, the hymn is a declaration of availability and surrender by saying "Lord, here I am, use me and my resources to build your church and bring glory to Your name!

In conclusion, the phrase, "Lord help me stand whatever the cost" echoes the sentiment of Matthew 14:22 to 33, where Peter walked on the water towards Jesus, until he looked elsewhere and started sinking until he looked back into Christ.

Summary

The hymn is a collection of prayers for the courage and faith to be creative, stay focused on God, even in challenging times. The hymn acknowledges the spiritual warfare we face, the importance of endurance, and the need for spiritual sensitivity and obedience. It's a prayer for God to use us, help us stand firm and live for Him until we reach our eternal home. See Malachi 3:10 and Luke. 6:38.

PAGES 47 and 49

JESUS FESTIVAL

Arise, fight, for victory is sure, Christians told at Jesus Festival

As Cathedral, Festac, Agege emerge 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively

By PAULINE OGHENEKARO

Christians have been told to arise and fight because their victory is sure.

This was a key message at this year's Jesus Festival.

The message is contained in the ministrations by Venerable Blessing Ajayi at the event.

Using the Diocesan theme as the basis for his sermon, Ajayi warned that there were many forces constantly rising to attack God's people in order to frustrate them, make them deny God and drop their faith.

He identified some of the weapons used by Satan as the world, the flesh, sickness, famine, insecurity, troubles within marriages and families, divorce, drug abuse and several others, which, he said, on a daily basis challenge Christians to battles.

He encouraged Christians to arise and fight because victory is sure.

The prayer sessions at the festival were spontaneous as participants poured out their hearts to God in anticipation of God's intervention and breakthrough in their lives.

Jesus Festival, which is the brainchild of the Diocesan, The Rt. Rev, Dr. James Olusola Odedeji, started in 2014. It's an annual event that brings the entire Diocese of Lagos West together to celebrate Jesus Christ, the Saturday before Easter.

Although COVID-19 took its toll on the festival, it bounced back in 2022 with more vigour and determination to live up to its objectives as a great gathering of Christians, raised anthems of praise and thanksgivings to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The 2024 edition was themed "Fight the Good Fight of Faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). It was organised by the Diocesan Board of Evangelism under the leadership of the Venerable Ebenezer Adewole with the authorisation of the Bishop.

The colourful event had parishioners from all archdeaconries across the diocese trooping into the Diocesan field in their numbers and making their way to their stands.

The excitement and eagerness to make the day a remarkable one was infectious.

On the dot of 9.00 a.m, the Cathedral Choir and band, known for their resounding and outstanding voices, filled the air with praise worship and this increased the tempo of the gathering.

The Dean of the Cathedral said the opening prayer.

At the podium to take the salute were Bishop Odedeji; his wife, Dr. Mrs. Lydia Olukemi Odedeji; the father of the Diocese, Chief Olusegun Osunkeye; and the Dean, The Ven Ebenezer Adewole, among other dignitaries.

The parade (march past) by various archdeaconries was a sight to behold. There were different displays, ranging from horse rides to traditional dances, acrobatic displays, to choreography. It was one awesome performance after the other.

The youth from the Cathedral Group of Churches, who sought permission to render their own song with the title, " Big God (By Tim Godfrey)" played and turned the entire crowd into a frenzy that even the Lord Bishop and all on the podium could not help but join in the euphoria.

Thumbs up for Sandra Oyira, Diran Areo, Imeroma Uche Ewulo and other youths, who worked tirelessly to make sure the event was successful.

The colours added by the Brigade Band will not be forgotten in a hurry. They kept the entire field agog and made the young, the elderly and the very aged marched excitedly to the glory of God.

The coordinators of the programme for the day, the Rev Fadipe Samuel and The Venerable Folorunsho Oginni, made sure all the activities ran seamlessly.

It is worthy to note that in this year's Jesus Festival, the AVMCC had an all female committee comprising:

- * Mrs. Abeke Jegede, chairperson
- * Mrs. Pauline Oghenekaro, secretary
- * Mrs. Funmi Wale Adegbite, member
- * Dr. Mrs Kike Adegbite, member
- * Mrs. Precious Emechebe, member
- * Mrs. Faith Okoli, member
- * Mrs. Ihuoma Azuru, member
- * Mrs. Nuella Izuagba, member

From the Cathedral Group of Churches were the following representatives

- * Mrs. Olayemi Odunubi (DIMAC)
 - * Mr James Nwankwo (Ogunbiyi Memorial Church)
 - * Mrs. Adeyemi Johnson (St Theophilus)
- Mr. Dapo Ogundipe (Security, AVMCC)

All these persons, in conjunction with all members of the Cathedral Group of Churches, made it possible for the trophy to be won.

Before the Bishop made his prophetic declaration and episcopal benediction, he thanked all for attending in huge numbers to honour God .He gave all the glory to God for the beautiful weather and testimonies.

The winners of the day were:

Cathedral Group of Churches - 1st

Festac Archdeaconry - 2nd

Agege Archdeaconry - 3rd

PAGES 50 and 51

BIBLE REVIEW

The Book of Leviticus

By JACINTA OLUSOGA

THIS is the third book in the Old Testament part of the Bible. Moses, the prophet of God, who led the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt is ascribed the authorship of the book of Leviticus.

The book contains events which took place between 1445-1444 B.C., during the sojourn of the children of Israel, in the wilderness, at the foot of Mount Sinai where they camped for a while.

The focus of the book is on holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). The Lord's Command in the Book of Leviticus is "Ye shall be holy: for I, the Lord thy God am holy" (Lev. 19:2).

Holiness is mentioned about 152 times in the book of Leviticus.

God is Holy and made man in His own image and likeness. Man was therefore created holy but man carelessly corrupted God's holy nature in him, through falling prey to the temptation of Satan in the Garden of Eden. Man, who walked in the presence of a holy God in the beginning because he was holy, became separated from God by sin.

God however loves man very much and would not want man to end up eternally in hell, which was prepared for the devil and his demons. He therefore, put plan in place to redeem man and reconcile man to Himself (Gen 3:15). But while God's plan was in the process of being fulfilled, God made a temporary solution to enable Him to continue to relate favourably with the people from among whom the Seed, the Saviour of the world from sin would emerge in due time from among them.

For a Holy God who cannot behold the pollution of sin to continue to relate with unholy sinful people, God put in place a set of laws and catalogue of sacrifices to assist His chosen people, the children of Israel to cover up their sins so that He could continue to relate with them. He knew they were under the bondage of sin and could not help themselves. He did not want to be so angry with them and destroy them, while waiting for the appointed time when His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, would emerge from their midst to redeem the whole world and humanity from the bondage of sin.

God also appointed for them a prophet, Moses, to lead them as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan. He also made Moses' older brother and his sons, priests, to offer the sacrifices for the nation. These are referred to as the Levitical priests.

It is to be noted, for emphasis, that the seed of the Woman, promised in Genesis 3:15, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the New Testament came to take away the sins of the whole world was fore-shadowed by the Levitical priesthood put in place by God through Moses, as a temporary measure to cover up the sins of the Jews so that God would continue to relate with them as His people and fulfil His purpose through them. This was a temporary measure, until the due time when His Son would come to the world to redeem the whole world and reconcile man back to God as His children (Gal 4:4-5).

It was therefore, to Moses, His beloved servant and prophet, that God committed His Laws and commands for sacrificial offerings, for holy living, for onward transmission to the children of Israel, the chosen people of God.

2.0) The Book

The Book is a 27-chapter book.

Chapters 1-17

The first seventeen chapters tell how to worship a holy God.

Instructions were given concerning every aspect of worshipping God:

— for the offerings: Five kinds of offerings were listed as follows: Burnt Offering, Sin Offering, Meat Grain/offering, Peace Offering, Trespass/ Guilt Offering. The animals and other items for sacrifices were listed depending on the purpose of the offerings/type of offerings.

— for the priests: They were to be consecrated, separated from the people, and dedicated to God and anointed for the purpose of presenting the people's sacrifices to God. They had instructions on their mode of dressing to appear before God. They had special access to God and offered the sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. They served as, intermediary between God and the people of Israel in the Old Testament. Jesus is the sacrifice and the only intermediary for the people in the New Testament.

— for the people: Instructions were given concerning the objects of worship to be presented to the priests by them, clean animals without blemish were emphasised. They were guided on personal cleanliness and purification.

— for the altar: Instruction on how the Priests should appear before the altar to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people. They must come clean. Hence it became necessary for them to first sacrifice to atone for their sins first, before proceeding to atone for the sins of the people and to offer other sacrifices on behalf of the people.

From the instructions given to the children of Israel which is also included in the standard reference book for Christians, the Bible, the right attitude is important to the worship of God. It is also important that man comes blameless before God, as there was emphasis on sacrificial offerings being without blemish. Confession of sins, and therefore, clean hearts and clean hands are important for sacrifices of prayers and praise to be acceptable to God.

The institution of the Day of Atonement also fore shadows how Christ became the supreme sacrifice for sins. No other sacrifice is therefore needed to atone for sins. Jesus the High Priest in the New Testament was without sin, therefore there was no need to first atone for His sin, before atoning for the sins of the world, as was the case with the Levitical Priesthood. He, as the priest, and the one and only sacrifice, died once for sinners.

Chapters Eighteen to Twenty-Seven: These chapters contain instructions on how to live a holy life, pointing out the standards for the people, standards for the priests, seasons, and festivals and how to receive God's blessings.

Sexual perversions were forbidden, Commands were given for daily righteous living, punishment for various sins are highlighted, the priests were to separate themselves from the holy things, they were not to profane the name of God, they were therefore to hallow the sacrifices made to God. They were not to offer strange fires to God. The following festivals were to be observed:

Feasts

Celebration of

- Passover — Deliverance from Egypt
- Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:5-8) — Old life jettisoned, new Life in place
- Festival of First Fruits (Lev. 23:9-14) — God's provision
- Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-22). - Thanksgiving for Harvest
- Festival of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25) — Joy and Thanksgiving
- Festival of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26-32) — Restored Fellowship with God
- Festival of the Tabernacles (Lev. 23:33-43) — Renewed Commitment to God

3.0) Other Instructions:

- i) Memorial Offering: The giving of oil to keep lamp burning on the altar, day, and night, continually.
- ii) Penalty for cursing God: Separation and stoning to death.
- iii) Sabbath Rest: Every seventh year.
- iv) Jubilee: Within a space of 49 years, on the 50th year, the year of Jubilee. The trumpet shall be sounded through all Israel. It is a year of rest for all. No sowing, no reaping, a year held holy unto the Lord.

v) Blessings for Obedience to the Instructions

God further promised to bless the people if they obeyed the instructions, He had given them. They will dwell in the land he had given them. They will never lack any good thing. There would be peace in their land, no one shall make them afraid, the sword shall not pass through their land, their enemies shall fall before them, they shall eat in abundance. They shall be fruitful and multiply.

vi) Disobedience

Disobedience to His instructions however will be calamitous. They will witness all the opposite of blessings of obedience.

vii) Final Chapter

In the final chapter, chapter 27, God instructed that vows made to Him must be honoured. Not honouring vows made to God amounts to dishonouring our Creator and Maker and it will not be taken lightly by God. God also instructed on the payment of tithes.

4.0) Summary, Comments and Advice

In this very important book of the Bible, God's concern for cleanliness and holiness, spirit, soul, and body are well demonstrated in the instructions given. Importance of rest is also very much emphasised.

Giving, Thanksgiving and Celebrations are also highlighted.

From the instructions, it is obvious that God has zero tolerance for sin. We, as the Church of God, His people, and children by adoption, should live holy lives on this earth as this is the condition for making Heaven where every Christian wishes to be eternally. No one can make Heaven, where our holy God is and see Him, if one is not holy. God will separate the holy from the unholy on the day of judgment.

Christians are therefore to be separated from sin and be dedicated to God.

Jesus is coming a second time, for a Church without blemish or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). We, therefore, as people of God, are hereby enjoined to be separated from sin and be dedicated to God in holiness.

There is no exception to the requirement of holiness to relate with God and to see Him at the end of our sojourn here on earth.

Jesus has paid the death penalty for sin on our behalf and has empowered us by His Spirit to live a life that is sinless. Let us live according to Divine instructions in the Bible and be blessed here on earth and make Heaven eternally, through faith and continuous obedience to the will of God.

It is important that every Christian should read the Book of Leviticus to appreciate the importance of Holiness as we live our lives in this world. The importance of living a holy life pulsates through the Book.

Remember, Jesus is coming back soon to take away with Him a holy and blameless Church. the Body of Christ, holy without blemish or wrinkle.

Reply Forward

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WEDDING AND BAPTISM

WEDDING

Weddings from 2023 to June 2024

GROOM

1. Eloka Joseph Oguchi
2. Collins Chukwufunnaya Nwanze
3. Akinbobola Joshua Odukoya
4. Ojerinde Olanrewaju Seun
5. Ajogbeje Oluwamayowa Ebenezer
6. Demeyin Utieyin Charles
7. Akuchukwu Ifeanyichukwu Nwachukwu
8. Oladapo Ayoola Smith
9. Chiedozie Paul Ofoma
10. Oluwafikayo Dayio Aforlayan

BRIDE

- Whitniy Chiamaka Ukachukwu
Asisoye Oluwaseun Adenuga
Omolaro Oluwabusola Ajayi
Obisesan Oluwakemi Titlope
Ojuoko Adeola Zhane Anysha
Mayuku Weyinmi Margaret
Pamela Prinye Cookey
Catherine Ifeyinwa Okoye
Chidimma Precious Nwokeke
Moji Abimbola Fasoribon

2024

1. Jacson Ifeanyi Amadi
2. Oluwafikayomi Adetunji Adenle
3. Benjamin Chizuru Ukaegbu
4. Ademola Ayodeji Ologboshere

- Uchenna Adaora Nwagbo
Sophia Mgpaiyeda
Ijeoma Judith Anichukwu
Esther Mauci Adjele

5. Namdi John Okwerekwu
6. Olusegun Bayonle Mimiko
7. Oluseyi Olawale Lawal
8. Olumayo Adebayo Oshadare
9. Oluwaseyi Hope Akindutire
10. Eseoghene Imoh
11. Alote Oluwasiji Bomi Joshua
12. Temiloluwa Edmund Fasodo
13. Victor Nonso Esealuka

- Vivan Oreoluwa Awosika
Similoluwa Anjolaoluwa Adesanya
Yetunde Alice Brown
Oluwakemi Priscilla Ojo
Ifeoluwa Oluwadamilola Fapohunda
Chukwudumebi Bielonwu
Olabode Oyebola
Omowunmi Damilola Oguntuase
Precious Ezinne Agu

BAPTISM

2024 baptism till date

1. Chukwuma Micheal Ifeanyi
2. Ojini Chigozirim Jediel
3. Omeeha Gabriella Chibugo
4. Okolie William Ifechi
5. Godwin Chikanyima Purity
6. Adedipe Adewale Oluwatosin
7. Achonye Chizurum Joel
8. Akeem Gbolhan Ibrahim
9. Akinnurel Toyin Mercy
10. Okeke Chimdiebube Carney- Zion
11. Omoregha Eyimofe Adesina Sion
12. Oche Fahari Jerri
13. Akinwale Tomiwa Samuel
14. Oyekan Titloayo Grace
15. Nigni Ikemefuma Chukwudi
16. Ajayi Oluwayemi Temitope
17. Dalami Shem Noma
18. Okugba Esther
19. Oloyede Adepeju Elizabeth
20. Oloyede Adebola Emmanuel

21. Olubaji Oluwatobiloba Emmanuel
22. Edim Adile Suleman
23. Ibitoye Boluwatife Rebecca
24. Asomugha Derrick Ifeayi
25. Asomugha Annabell Oluomachi
26. Asomugha George Ndubeza
27. Anagor Miracle Amaranna
28. Ezeh Kosisonna Giana
29. Adams Agyer Safiya
30. Okafor Chiagoziem Dawn
31. Okafor Chimebuka David
32. Adeowu Benjamin Oluwaseyi
33. Rahab John
34. Mary Toriola
35. Olusade Joyce Orunlogo
36. Olusade Saint Eriorun
37. Kalu Destiny Onyekachi
38. Okafor Chimidi Daniel
39. Okafor Chimebuka David
40. Ugochukwu Jeffrey Chinedu
41. Unuigbe Bernice Ebahi
42. Achubisi Chiziterem Tamunoloa
43. Odiari Chukwuebuka Kosisochukwu Chukwuemeka
44. Adenlawo Davide Olayiwola
45. Adanlawo Esther Morotoluwa
46. Gogo-Kurubo Ibifuro Ijeoma Ivanna
47. Arah Chiamaka
48. Akande Opeyemi Temitope
49. Umeh Chioma Favour
50. Ochokwu Ruby Mmasichukwu

51. Adeye Boluwatife Annunimorigba Oluwasemiloore
52. Adewale Mobolaji Balogun
53. Okoye Diana Chizitelum Chidinna
54. Solomon Chizaram Onwa
55. Akabike Ikechukwu Daniel
56. Chinemelu Chikamso Jane .

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CONFIRMATION

- 1 IBEH Kema Nuella
- 2 OLUBAJI Tobiloba Emmanuel
- 3 IHEZUE Favour Ijeoma
- 4 ANEMEJE Ezinne Chidimma
- 5 AKINMURELE Toyin Mercy
- 6 OYEFESO Titilayo Grace
- 7 OLOYEDE Adebola Emmanuel
- 8 OLAFIMIHAN Oluwabusayo Dorcas
- 9 OGUELIWU Christopher Mmerichuckwu
- 10 NWACHUKWU Amarachi Destiny
- 11 NWACHUKWU Chiziterem Kamsiyochi
- 12 IROABUEKE HyeInI
- 13 EZEObIORA Chibuikem Praise
- 14 EZEObIORA Gimkachukwu Favour
- 15 AMUZIE Destiny Ikedinachukwu
- 16 GBADEYAN Ademola Josiah
- 17 GBADEYAN Funmilayo Kuburat
- 18 ORAKWUE Uchechukwu Michael
- 19 AJAYI Oluwayemi Temitope
- 20 NWANKWO Chikanyima Helen
- 21 NWANKWO Chimamanda Emmanuella
- 22 EDUN Adila Suleman
- 23 ADAMS Agyer Safiya
- 24 UCHECHUKWU-EBOH Stephanie Chisom
- 25 CHINENYE-CHIBUNDU Chizitere Treasure
- 26 UDOYE Somto Nwanneka Venus
- 27 UDOYE Vincent Toochukwu Nwakire
- 28 CHIBUZOR Victory Kenechuckwu
- 29 ADEYEMI Demilade Abraham
- 30 EZEANYA Chiamaka Chinwendu
- 31 EZEANYA Chika Obianuju
- 32 ORAMADIKE Ebubechukwu Samuel
- 33 CHUKWUNACHI Marvellous Mmesoma
- 34 IBITOYE Boluwatife Rebecca

35 OKONKWO Ebubechukwu Onyedikachi
36 UMEADI Henry Chukwuemeka
37 FRIDAY Emmanuel Temitope
38 MELAIYE Anuoluwapo Oluwajomiloju
39 ONWUSIKA Somtochukwu Ifeoma
40 OMAKA Daberechi Emmanuel
41 OMAKA Chikwado Emmanuella
42 OSINIGWE Oluomachukwu Abigail
43 ADEYELU Taiwo Adesewa
44 ADEYELU Kehinde Adebukola
45 UZOHO Jayanma Michael
46 UZOHO Jayaike Okechukwu Joshua
47 IZUAGBA Sky Zara
48 OMOREGHA, Eyimofe Adesina Iyanu
49 ADESUGBA Odunayo Dorcas
50 IZUAGBA Price Kamsi
51 ASOMUGHA Annabell Oluomachi
52 FERRAO Sheldon
53 NOMA Shem Dalami
54 ANAGOR Miracle Amaranna
55 AGWUNA Chibuikem Gideon
56 ORAKWUE Onyinyechukwu Jane
57 OLALEYE Oluwadamilola
58 OLALEYE Moyosoreoluwa
59 OLALEYE Opemipo
60 ANEKWE Chukwudozie Chukwuebuka
61 EJIOFOR Chisom Malachy
62 OYENEYE Gbolahan Temitope
63 OKAFOR Chimebuka David
64 OKAFOR Chiagoziem Dawn
65 ADEDIPE Adewale Oluwatosin
66 KALU Destiny Onyekachi
67 UGOCHUKWU Jeffrey Chinedu
68 AHAMBA Precious Chiemela
69 OLUSADA Saint Eriorun
70 OLUSADA Joyce Orunlogo
71 OLUDARE Matthew Olusegun
72 OLUDARE Victoria Ifeouwa
73 OSINOWO Oluwatobiloba Olamilekan
74 NWANKWO Kamsiyochukwu Prosper
75 JOHN Rahab Nhwei

77 ADEOWU Benjamin Oluwaseyi
78 GODWIN Victor Nzubechukwu
79 EZEKWO Kaobimsiyochukwu Gabriel-De-Angelo
80 OKOYE Charles Uchenna
81 IBRAHIM Akeem Gbolahan
82 OYEDOKUN Olanrewaju Amos

- 83 AJISAFE Samuel Olabode
- 84 DARAMOLA Naomi Adepeju
- 85 DARAMOLA David Mosimiloluwa
- 86 ODIARI Chukwuebuka
- 87 ADANLAWO Esther Morotoluwa
- 88 NWOYE Adaeze Nobuhle
- 89 OREMADE Gift Pamilerin Rebecca

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HEROES OF THE CHURCH with DARE BABARINSA

Bishop Michael Adeniyi Osanyin

“Osanyin became bishop of a nascent diocese at a challenging period when the faith was confronted by doubts from within and billowing winds from without.”

As it were, Bishop Michael Adeniyi Osanyin, the first bishop of Ekiti Anglican Diocese, was seen as the forerunner of the immense episcopacy of Bishop Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye. Indeed, without the influential career of Osanyin and his capacity to build the church as a missionary and leader of the faith, the history of the Church of Nigeria would have been different. He represented the bridge between the old and the new and he was one of those pioneers, who showed in practical terms that there is, indeed, One-Fold and One Shepherd. He conquered great odds and through perseverance and great faith, weathered many storms. He was not perfect, but he sought perfection with Christian fortitude.

When he became the Archdeacon of Ekiti Archdeaconry in 1953, he was confronted with an unsettled atmosphere where many of the older priests regarded him as an intruder. He had served in many stations in Northern Nigeria, including Kano, where he and his wife, Lydia, had ministered to the fold with distinction and good record.

It was from the North that he was posted to the Ondo-Benin Diocese, which was then overseeing the Ekiti Archdeaconry. The old Ondo-Benin Diocese is now split into many dioceses covering the present Ondo, Ekiti, Edo and Delta states. Osanyin was only the second African to head the Archdeaconry and he came with the mandate to reform and reposition the church.

The Ekiti District was originally headed by Archdeacon Dallimore, a British missionary famous for his pioneering role at Christ School, Ado-Ekiti. When Dallimore retired in 1947, the Anglican Church then, still mostly controlled by British clergy, posted an African, Canon P.S. Adeyinka, to succeed him. Adeyinka had been serving in Abeokuta and he regarded his transfer to the hilly country of Ekiti as a special challenge. His colleagues did not welcome him with open arms for they resented his patriarchal aloofness and censorious knowledge of the Holy Scripture.

Moreover, the church authorities did not promote him to become an archdeacon and this may have affected his morale and his standing among subordinates. Instead of making him an archdeacon, the church authorities invented a new title for him as the Superintendent of Ekiti Anglican District. Such icy humour was not uncommon in the church of those days when the British were in charge.

When Osanyin came in 1950, he was armed with a full mandate. Following agitation from many prominent Ekiti citizens, Ekiti District became a full archdeaconry in 1953 and Osanyin became the first archdeacon.

As the leader of the Anglican Church in Ekiti, he faced the new, almost unstoppable hurricane represented by the vigorous Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), and its charismatic leader, the peripatetic Pastor Joseph Ayo Babalola, who had pitched his tent in Effon-Alaaye, one of the most important Ekiti

towns. Couple with this was the raging conflict of local politics, which seems to drag in the authorities of the Anglican Church, leading to the emergence of the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), as a force to be reckoned with in many towns, especially in Usi and Ilawe. The RCM was often invited by aggrieved members of the Anglican Church. It is an eternal testament to Osanyin's indefatigable skill as a leader and his capacity as a priest that despite these billowing challenges, the Anglican Church remained the largest denomination in Ekiti State till today.

There was joy across the land when the Ekiti Diocese was created in 1966 and Osanyin was elected as the first Bishop. Many of his opponents, including fellow priests, resented the elevation of this Hausa Man! They said he had spent so much time in the North that he was more or less a northerner and not a Yoruba. They did not know, or refused to acknowledge Osanyin's illustrious heritage as a prince of the church. His father was a celebrated catechist, who had risked his life to bring the eternal Word of Christ to many parts of Nigeria.

To those critics, even the labour of father and son were not enough. They wondered aloud how a priest should carry the ancient name of Osanyin, the same name as that of a popular Yoruba deity, feared for its dreadful aspect and the forbidden incantations of its acolytes.

For these critics, all was fair that was foul in love and war. Osanyin won and on October 28, 1966, he was consecrated bishop at the Saint Stephen Cathedral, Oke-Aluko, Ondo. He was enthroned on October 30, 1966 at the Emmanuel Cathedral, Ado-Ekiti in a colourful ceremony. It was the first time Ekiti was witnessing the enthronement of a bishop.

Osanyin glorious career was halted by a personal tragedy. He had lost his first son in a train disaster and the tragedy burdened him for many years until he too died in 1970 after suffering a massive stroke.

He was succeeded by the iconic Abiodun Adetiloye, who was destined to become the Bishop of Lagos and later Archbishop Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.

One of Osanyin's priests was our father, Peter Awelewa Adebisi, who became the second Bishop of Owo and was translated to become the first Bishop of Lagos West Diocese.

Osanyin's good deeds continue to have impact down the years. His first daughter, Mabel, got married to Oduola Osuntokun, a teacher and prominent politician of the First Republic, who served as minister in the defunct Western Region for 11 years. In his hometown of Ijebu-Jesa, an Anglican church is named in his honour. In the three dioceses that has inherited the old Ekiti Diocese; Ekiti West, Ekiti Oke and Ekiti, Osayin's name remain synonymous with dignity, Christian charity, industry and selfless labour in the Lord's Vineyard.

PAGES 56 and 57

LANDMARK SERMON

Christian attitude to terminal illness

*A sermon preached by Venerable Azubike Edward Ahubelem

Text of the sermon: (John 5:2-14)

Outline

What is in this sermon for us?

How do I respond to terminal illness when faced with it?

What are our responsibilities towards people with terminal illness?

Conclusion

John 5:2-14

2. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.
3. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie — the blind, the lame, the paralysed.
5. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.
6. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"
7. "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."
8. Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."
9. At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,
10. And so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."
11. But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"
12. So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"
13. The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.
14. Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

INTRODUCTION

The phrase "scramble around to find a doctor when you're sick" directly reflects people's feelings of anxiety, helplessness and panic when they get sick and the panic is more when the diagnosis is a terminal illness like - malignant growth, tumour, rebellious cell, cyst, abnormality in the lymphatic system, circulatory system, immune system, endocrine system, muscular system, nervous system, reproductive system, respiratory system, skeletal system, urinary system, and digestive system. Jesus told us that in this world we would have troubles (John 16:33), and absolutely no one is spared (Romans 5:12). Yet coping with any degree of suffering becomes easier when we understand God's overall design to redeem our fallen world. We may not be guaranteed physical health in this life, but those who trust in God are promised spiritual security for all eternity (John 10:27-28). Nothing can touch the soul. As a typical evidence of somebody living the midst of the crowd of the church is my experience. I have had stoke, I was rushed overseas for treatment, that time, medical treatment in Nigeria, was and still in its infancy.

It is good to remember that not everything bad that happens to us is a direct result of our sin. Having a terminal illness is not proof of God's judgment on an individual. Recall the time Jesus and His disciples came upon a man who had been blind since birth.

The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to consider the suffering our Saviour endured so that we ourselves do not grow weary and lose heart in our own trials. It was "for the joy set before Him" that Christ was able to endure the suffering of the cross. This "joy," for Christ, was in obeying His Father's will (Psalm 40:8), reconciling His Father with His creation, and being exalted to the right hand of the throne of God.

Likewise, our own trials can be made more bearable when we consider the "joy" set before us. (Job 23:10; Romans 8:29). What we see as pain and discomfort and uncertainty, our sovereign Father – who ordains or allows every event during our time on earth – sees as transformation.

Our suffering is never meaningless. God uses suffering to change us, to minister to others, and, ultimately, to bring glory to His name.

The problem of human illness raises a difficult question that will confront all of us, sooner or later: Why do people get sick? The answer to this question is not easy, but the answer is not: "It is God's will." God does not want people to get sick.

Man and woman were created in a good world and they lived under ideal conditions. Then, they sinned against God. When they sinned, several things happened: they left God's ideal place, death entered the world through sin and death spread to all people (Romans 5:12). Thus, from a biblical perspective, sickness is the result of sin entering into this world.

The food we eat is preserved with chemicals, the air we breathe is filled with pollutants, the water we drink has many contaminants that affect our health. People smoke and cigarettes kill people. People breathe second-hand smoke and they also get sick.

Healthy people come into contact with people who are sick and their illness affects the healthy. People do not wash their hands and they transmit their diseases to others. That is how people get sick. It is not what God does. It is what we do to ourselves; it is what other people do to us.

How do we respond to terminal illness when faced with it?

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes wrote: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to ... heal" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 ESV). What was not said is that between the time to be born and the time to heal, there is a time to be sick.

All of us eventually will be concerned about sickness. Either we will be sick or a person we love will become ill and even die because of that disease. What happens to people when tragedy strikes? When tragedy strikes people will react in different ways. So, what must people do when sickness comes?

1 When some people get sick, their sickness leads to panic, resentment, or resignation. To others, their sickness helps them look at their own life from a different perspective. When some people get sick, their illness gives way to despair and they give up on life or blame God for their illness. When sick, some people drown their sorrows in drinking, others try to alleviate their pain with drugs, while others commit suicide or turn to evil and try to atone for their tragedy by killing others. To a small group of people, sickness leads them to faith and to dedication of their life to a higher purpose. Many people have learned that when they are on their backs, they are forced to look up. Often, people turn to God to find hope in the midst of despair and to find healing through divine intervention.

When you become sick, it is a time that you will need to have a strong faith in God. The Bible emphasizes the power of believing faith.

For you to gain healing and health through faith and prayer, several things must happen:

You must believe that God can and will heal.

The Bible says: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

2. You must believe in the combined power of medical science and religious faith. God works through physical laws and through spiritual laws. God made the physicians and God made the medicines. They are God's special agents for the healing of sick people.

You must remove spiritual hindrances to healing such as sins and wrong attitudes.

Sin and wrong attitudes go together. They cause many of the illnesses that affect human lives. People who practice sexual promiscuity get sexually transmitted diseases. People who use drugs are more susceptible to various kinds of illness. Anger causes stress and stress causes heart attacks. Unforgiven sins bring guilt and guilt causes many physical and psychological illnesses.

You must accept God's will for your life and you must be willing to accept his answer to your prayers, whatever that answer might be.

When people get sick and pray and there is no healing, people ask: "Why is it that God brings healing to certain people and not to others?" I believe that the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well, but it is also possible that healing may not be God's will every time a person prays for healing. Jesus prayed: "Father, if it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. But let your will be done rather than mine" (Matthew 26:39). It was not God's will for the cup be removed, so Jesus suffered.

We have to remember that sooner or later, all of us will die: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2). We have to die in order to gain eternal life. God's will for your life is health instead of sickness, it is strength rather than weakness, pleasure instead of pain, for God does not enjoy seeing His children suffer. But sickness will come and so will death.

When we believe in Christ and pray in faith, when we do all we can within our power to use the means of health available to us, when we surrender our wrongs and open the way for his cleansing and forgiving love, and above all, when we trust his wisdom in the answer he gives us, then a marvellous peace will come to us. God's peace eliminates our fears and our despair.

After his friend, Lazarus, died because of his illness, Jesus told Martha, Lazarus' sister: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26). Some sickness may end in health, others in death. Martha was thinking about the healing of Lazarus' body and a longer life for him on this earth, but Jesus was thinking about another kind of life, a life that would be everlasting.

What are our responsibilities towards people with terminal illness?

Let's consider seven aspects of shepherding the terminally ill.

1. Shepherd them the way you would want to be shepherded.

As we seek to serve those that may be much closer to death than we are now, let's keep in mind our own mortality. How would we want to be shepherded in such times?

You want someone who's compassionate, who seeks to enter into the anguish you're facing rather than just wanting to check another duty off a to-do list. The terminally ill need someone who's realistic about what lies ahead, not a well-wisher who keeps repeating, “I just think everything is going to be okay.” Yes, everything will be all right when we see Jesus, but right now it's not. Face reality with this suffering saint.

2. Shepherd them with compassion, eye contact, gentleness, and touch.

They need your focus, touch, and sensitivity. Unsightly things and unpleasant odours may be around, but you're there to serve with love and compassion.

3. Shepherd them with gospel truth.

It's always appropriate to talk about Christ. Reading Gospel portions breathes peace into a weary soul (e.g. John 5; 6; 10; 11). We derive great comfort from the faithfulness and sufficiency of Jesus revealed in the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8–12; Titus 2:11–14). So speak about what Christ has done. If there is no comfort in the gospel, there is no real comfort anywhere. Rely on the sufficiency of Christ to help that suffering saint walk the last steps into the arms of the Saviour.

4. Shepherd them with a view to eternity with hope fixed on Christ.

Here's where we need to lay groundwork in our weekly exposition of God's Word. So much of Scripture focuses on eternity. We're a generation far more accustomed to thinking about living than about life's brevity and the glory of eternity.

Share an excerpt from a past sermon that this that this brother and sister has heard, share the joy of what lies ahead and help them ponder the staggering reality of seeing the glory of Christ.

5. Shepherd them toward assurance of salvation.

Talk about assurance of salvation with the dying saint. Gently ask questions and make comments about relying on Christ alone. Help to them see that Jesus is faithful to keep his own for eternity, that nothing can separate us from his love.

6. Shepherd them toward joy in God's sovereignty.

John in Revelation 5, gives us a picture of the sovereign rule of Jesus over the details of our lives—including our suffering and dying. When John explained that the Lamb “came and took the book out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne” (Rev. 5:7), he gave assurance to suffering saints that affliction is never in vain. Everything is on schedule to display the goodness and grace of God.

7. Shepherd them with Scripture-soaked prayers, good hymnody, and stories of saints finishing well. Prayer must always be part of your service to the terminally ill. Let your prayers reflect the application of Scripture you've read and discussed. Let them know that though they are weak and may find prayer difficult, the body is praying with them and the Spirit is helping them in their weakness (Rom. 8:26–27). Singing or reading a hymn at the bedside may also offer special comfort.

CONCLUSION

If you have been diagnosed with a terminal illness, I would humbly offer this advice and prayer: make sure that you are a true child of God, having trusted Jesus as your Saviour (Romans 10:9-10).

Then, as Hezekiah was told, “Put your house in order” (Isaiah 38:1); that is, make sure important documents, like your will, are ready and other necessary arrangements have been made. If you have broken relationships, do what you can to mend them.

Use the remaining time God gives you to grow spiritually and minister to others. Continue to rely on the power of God for day-to-day strength, and, as the Lord gives grace, thank Him for your “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Finally, take comfort in Jesus' promise of eternal life and peace. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

Father God, in the name of Jesus, we thank You that You are a healer of all diseases and terminal illnesses.

We snatch all legal rights of the enemy to invade our bodies. We speak now to terminal illness, and we say that you must die in the name of Jesus.

We speak to every spirit of death, hell and the grave and command you to come out in the name of Jesus.

We say that disease, infirmity, and sickness cannot hide in our bodies, we say that every word curse, hex, vexation, or spell spoken against us cannot prosper.

The Word says in Mark 16:18: “They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Therefore, we say that any therapy or medical treatment administered will not harm us or do any damage to us but will be an instrument of correction.

We say that the Lord will use the hands of His anointed and the knowledge of physicians as an instrument of healing.

We declare according to Job 33:25 that our flesh will be fresher than a child's, and we will return to the days of our youth. The Lord forgives our iniquities and heals our diseases.

We thank God for total victory in Jesus' name.

AMEN!

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FITNESS with FUNMI AZIKE

Incorporate fitness into everyday activities

Physically, nothing is more rewarding than consistent exercise combined with healthy eating. But should it end there? Aside from exercise, lifestyle, and dietary adjustments, incorporating more physical activities into your everyday life—such as walking instead of taking a car, bus, or bike ride, or using the stairs instead of the elevator—can also help you stay strong, fit, and burn extra calories.

Below are other ways you can boost your fitness levels:

Do your house chores

Nobody is turning you into a slave; we're just helping you to look good and stay healthy longer. Did you know you can burn 150 to 200 calories from dusting and cleaning for about an hour?

Yes! Think of all the calories you will burn doing the dishes, ironing your clothes, taking out the trash, scrubbing the bathroom, etc. Does it sound ridiculous? Trust me, with an open mind, some of these activities can become fun workouts rather than stressful household chores. Next time you get thirsty while watching TV, don't yell at the maid to get you a glass of water—just get up and burn some calories. Now look around your home and find other ways to be more active.

Do some outdoor chores too

If you can burn much calories doing housework, now imagine mowing to the lawn, washing your car(s), tending the garden, trimming the flowers, cleaning out the drainage, etc. Impossible, you say? Are you worried about what the neighbors will think? Seriously, it doesn't matter if you have maids, children, or relatives living with you who can do most of these things; you are doing them to keep yourself healthy and fit. Personally, I wouldn't mind what anyone thinks if I had to wash my latest G Wagon (wish).

Walk at work

Remember what you looked like back in the days when you didn't have a secretary or personal assistant? Sitting at your desk for long hours can encourage weight gain and all its associated health problems. Despite your extremely busy schedule, you must find ways to be physically active at work. You can get up, stretch, and take a walk around your desk for a few minutes every hour. Also, you can take a fast walk around the complex/building during your lunch break. Think of other ways too—the whole idea is to move your body as much as possible while you are at work. Why buzz Mary to get you those files down the hall or fix you tea? Get up and get them yourself. It will provide a tremendous workout for your body.

Ditch the car

I have always believed one of the reasons why people from Noah's time lived longer was because they didn't have cars. A lot of us don't walk anymore. Do we really have to drive to the vendor down the street to get a newspaper? When we do that or struggle for parking spaces closest to where we are going, we are depriving ourselves of good exercise. Next time you visit the mall, park a bit farther from the entrance and walk. Yes, walk! Birds were designed to fly; fish were designed to swim, and humans were designed to walk. Ask Noah and some of his friends who didn't have 'motorwagens', not to mention the swift and sleek automobiles we drive around these days.

Carry your bags

It is not enough to park far from the entrance. Walking will help you burn calories and tone your limbs, and carrying your bags while doing it will further increase your muscle strength and tone your arms. Now, you can start saying “no thank you” to those shop assistants that deprive you of rewarding exercise—except, of course, you purchased a 50kg bag of rice (you will get there soon).

Dance and dance

'Owambes' no longer have to be an avenue for dense carousing; you can get a good workout from dancing. I particularly wear comfortable shoes for this purpose. Next time you are at a party, don't just sit like a beautiful statue—get up and have some fun. You don't have to be a professional dancer; just move to the rhythm. Even if you are not an 'owambe' person, try to undermine David's reputation in

church next Sunday. Who knows? In the next millennium, someone might be singing “I will dance as Funmi danced.”

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LAW & YOU

By **Odunsanmi Salami**

Proverbs 11:15 (AMP) says he who puts up security and guarantees a debt for an outsider will surely suffer (for his foolishness), but he who hates (declines) being a guarantor is secure (from its penalties).

Who is a guarantor?

According to Black's Law Dictionary, a guarantor is someone who gives security for a debt.

A guarantor agrees to stand in for another, gives assurances for the performance of an obligation and pledges to be liable in the event of default on the part of that other person.

Technically, a guarantor of a loan is a debtor. Where the primary debtor fails to pay the loan, the guarantor will be called upon to pay the loan so guaranteed.

The guarantor is liable to the extent of the amount unpaid, that is the outstanding obligation which they must meet, or else legal action may be brought against them to secure the payment of the outstanding liability.

Who can act as a guarantor?

A guarantor must have the legal capacity to enter into a contract. They must be of sound mind and of legal age, over 18 years of age. Typically, they must be resident within the country where the guarantor agreement is entered into and deemed financially capable, having exemplary credit histories and sufficient income. A guarantor must be able to cover payment of the loan where the debtor defaults.

Contract of Guarantee/Guarantor's Agreement

A guarantor's agreement or a contract of guarantee is an agreement between the guarantor, the lender and the debtor wherein the guarantor promises or undertakes to settle or pay the financial indebtedness of the principal debtor to the lender where the principal debtor is not able to pay the debt. It is a written undertaking made by one person to another to be responsible to that other if a third person fails to perform a certain duty (*Amede v. U.B.A.* (2008) 8 NWLR 629).

A guarantor is in a contractual relationship with the lender and the debtor; and like every other contract, the obligations created therein are enforceable and recognisable by law. When a guarantor enters into such agreement with the lender, a distinct and separate contract is created, which can be enforced against the guarantor directly and independently without necessarily joining the primary debtor to the proceedings to enforce the payment of the loan.

In *Yemole (Nig.) Ltd. v. Access Bank Plc* (2020) 17 NWLR (Pt 1752) 79, a Supreme Court judgement held that the right of a creditor is not conditional as he is entitled to proceed against the guarantor independently without joining the borrower.

Similarly, in the case *Crown Flour Mills Ltd v Olokun* (2008) 4 NWLR at page 298 Para F-H, it was held that:

“...in a contract of guarantee, the law has moved to the centre to make right of the creditor to so proceed against the guarantor less conditional... a creditor is entitled to proceed against the guarantor without or independent of the default of the principal debtor.”

It is of no consequence whether or not the guarantor benefited from the loan granted to the debtor. As long as there is a contract of guarantee between the parties and the debtor has defaulted in his repayment obligation, the guarantor will be held liable.

Liability of a guarantor

The liability of a guarantor crystallises the moment the debtor is unable to pay their outstanding debt and may be required to repay the loan in full if the debtor defaults on repayments.

In *C.B.N v Interstella Comm. Ltd.* (2018) 7 NWLR (Pt.1618) Page 294 at 308, the Supreme Court held that:

“A guarantor is technically a debtor because where the principal debtor fails to pay his debt, the guarantor will be called upon to pay the money owed. However, the fact that the obligations of the guarantor arise only when the principal debtor has defaulted in his obligations to the creditor does not mean that the creditor has to demand payment from the principal debtor or from the guarantor or give notice to the guarantor before the creditor can proceed against the guarantor, nor does the creditor have to commence proceedings whether criminal or civil, against the principal debtor unless there is an express term in the contract requiring him to do so.”

The guarantor is obligated to ensure that the loan is repaid in accordance with the loan agreement. However, it is imperative to state here that the police, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and other prosecutorial authorities lack the requisite powers to arrest a person over a breach in a Guarantor's Agreement and the court frowns on the interference of the police in civil and contractual matters.

The Police Act, which states the duties of the police, does not include the settlement of civil disputes or the collection of debts or enforcement of civil agreements between parties.

In *Ogbonna Vs Ogbonna* (2014) LPELR - 22308 CA; (2014) 23 WRN 48, the Court of Appeal held that the police had no business helping parties to settle or recover debts. Furthermore, anyone who uses the police to settle a private matter would be liable for the wrongful act of the police. See the case of *NKPA vs. NKUME* (2001) 6 NWLR (Pt.710) 543.

Consequently, if you are arrested for being a guarantor by the police or any other prosecutorial agency, you can sue for the enforcement of your Fundamental Human Rights and you will be entitled to damages.

Rights of a guarantor

You may be asking, what then is the right of the guarantor? The guarantor may, where he has paid the lender on behalf of the debtor, recover from the debtor what he has paid with interest. It is his right to bring another or separate action against the debtor for the loan which he the guarantor has paid. In the event the lender has obtained judgment against the principal debtor, the guarantor is entitled to levy execution on it. He is equally entitled to any security, which the lender might have obtained in addition to the guarantee.

Discharge & termination

A guarantor will be discharged of liabilities where the following conditions are met;

Fulfilment of the terms and conditions between the lender and the debtor,

Where his obligation under the guarantor's agreement has been satisfied,

Where the principal debt has been extinguished by an act or acts of the parties,

Where a limitation or prescriptive period has elapsed,

Where a court applies a presumption which operates to terminate the contract of guarantee.

(*F.B.N. Plc v. Songonuga* [2007] 3 NWLR (Pt. 1021) 243)

A guarantor can terminate his guarantor's agreement where there is evidence of fraud, misappropriation of the loan fund, deception or misrepresentation and duress.

Conclusion

Anyone considering entering into a guarantor agreement should painstakingly go through the contract, ensure the debtor is someone they can vouch for and, most importantly, seek legal advice to have a clear understanding of their rights and obligations.

It is pertinent you remember this: that your decision to stand as a guarantor means that in the event of a default, you bear the liability of the debtor whom you are guaranteeing.

The Bible puts it this succinctly: "Don't agree to guarantee another person's debt or put up security for someone else. If you can't pay it, even your bed will be snatched from under you." Proverbs 22:26-27 (New Living Translation).

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INTERNAL ADVERT (ADVERTISEMENT OPPORTUNITY)

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DEAN'S COLUMN (Ebenezer Adewole)

Steps to raising balanced Godly children

Balancing religious teachings with secular education can be a challenging task for parents, but it is certainly possible with some careful consideration. Here are some suggestions on how to effectively balance the two:

- 1. Open Communication:** Encourage your children to ask questions and have open discussions about both religious teachings and secular topics. Create a safe space for them to explore and understand different viewpoints.
- 2. Teach Critical Thinking:** Help your children to develop critical thinking skills so they can evaluate different sources of information and form their own opinions. Encourage them to question and analyse what they learn, both in a religious and secular context.
- 3. Integration:** Look for opportunities to integrate religious teachings into everyday life and secular education. For example, you can discuss moral values and ethical principles from your faith tradition in relation to historical events or literature.
- 4. Respect Differences:** Teach your children to respect and appreciate different beliefs and perspectives. Encourage them to engage with people from diverse backgrounds and learn from their experiences.
- 5. Practical application:** Help your children see how their religious teachings can be applied in real-life situations. Encourage them to practise kindness, compassion and empathy towards others, regardless of their beliefs.
- 5. Practical application:** Help your children see how their religious teachings can be applied in real-life situations. Encourage them to practise kindness, compassion and empathy towards others, regardless of their beliefs.

6. Encourage Exploration: Allow your children to explore different subjects and interests beyond religion. Support them in pursuing their passions and developing a well-rounded education.

By striking a balance between religious teachings and secular education, parents can help their children to develop a strong foundation of faith while also preparing them to navigate the complexities of the modern world.