

CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN NIGERIA (CCRN)

ABUJA ARCHDIOCESE

20TH EDITION

2024 PRAYER PROJECT

THEME:

OCCUPY

TILL I COME

LUKE 19:12-13.

Date: 31st December, 2023 - 28th January, 2024

A 29-DAY PRAYER AND FASTING PROJECT

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Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Nigeria (CCRN)

Abuja Archdiocese
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PRAYER PROJECT GUIDELINES

1. The Prayer Project for year 2024 begins on 31st December, 2023.
2. Conclusion of the Prayer Project will be centralized and held at Papal's Ground on 28th January, 2024.
3. Fasting and prayer shall be for 29 days.
4. This Prayer Project is a four-week programme.
5. The focus of the four-week programme are:
 - Week 1: Jesus Paid the Price
 - Week 2: The Impact of the Holy Spirit
 - Week 3: Advancing the Kingdom of God
 - Week 4: Occupy till I Come
6. Critical Notes:
 - Week 1: Members are encouraged to go for Sacramental confession.
 - Week 2: Prayer Groups are encouraged to hold Holy Ghost impartation prayer meetings.
 - Week 3: Prayer Groups are encouraged to organize evangelical outreach.
 - Week 4: Members are encouraged to carry out corporal/spiritual works of mercy.
7. Members are encouraged to reach an agreement with the Holy Spirit on what they intend to sow for the projects of the CCRN in Abuja Archdiocese. Payment can be made from 1st – 28th January, 2024 into the ADSC account details indicated below:

Account Name: Catholic Charismatic Renewal Abuja Archdiocese

Account No.: 2752020467 Bank: Eco Bank

8. The theme and objectives of this manual will serve as guide and vision for the Archdiocese through the year 2024.
9. Sincere commitment to this programme will bring about God's light and repositioning of lives for greatness in 2024.
10. Observe daily personal quite time for at least 30 minutes and sustain same during and after the programme.
11. Prayer groups are encouraged to meet as often as possible during the week for prayers and meditation.
12. Deaneries should hold their prayer vigil in the 3rd week provided there is a secured venue.
13. All Prayer Groups will be assigned Speakers on the day of prayer meeting by the Deanery Coordinators who shall be held responsible for same.
14. Take note of the daily Litany Chant and Hymn.
15. Security alertness should be maintained during this programme.

SECURITY TIPS FOR THE RALLY

1. Bags will not be allowed into the premises of the Rally.
2. Coordinated security checks will be carried out. Please cooperate fully with the Steward/Security Agents.
3. Loitering during the programme is prohibited.
4. Please report all unclear and abnormal actions to the steward/security agents.
5. Trust God and relax in His presence.

FOREWORD

OCCUPY TILL I COME

All glory be to God Almighty for the gift of Catholic Charismatic Renewal to the church and for the annual prayer project of the Charismatic Renewal in Abuja Archdiocese. This year's theme 'Occupy Till I Come', taken from the gospel of Luke 19 vs 12-13, reveals the mind of God for His elect. The Scripture text says 'A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back'.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a spiritual movement with the life of Christ animated in words and actions. It spreads like wildfire because the founder and leader is the Holy Spirit who leads in a dynamic way. He has given you spiritual gifts, accept and use it carefully and judiciously for Him in advancing God's kingdom. He understands everything about you, your secret thought, failure, weakness, pains, lack, challenges, disappointments etc, yet he chose you for Himself and appointed you to bear fruit as revealed in John 15 vs 16 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name'. He also chose you to continue to occupy for Him in all things until He comes.

I hereby encourage you to be committed and participate effectively in this prayer project and your efforts will definitely be rewarded and your prayers answered through Jesus Christ our Lord amen.

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Sanni
Archdiocesan Chaplain

FROM THE DESK OF THE ADSC CHAIRMAN

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, is a spiritual movement, its founder and leader is the Holy Spirit who leads with divine principles and in dynamic ways. Therefore, it is imperative for every member of the Renewal to uphold the mission statement as received from Him **'search for the abandoned and bring them back, look for those outside and bring them in, look after those inside and sustain them, revive and transform them for Me'**.

I hereby charge you to be focused and committed to God's call and participate effectively in this year 2024 prayer project with the theme **'Occupy Till I Come'**. Luke 19 vs 12 - 13.

As a Renewal member, you have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and enabled by God to represent Jesus here on earth with His fruit animated in words and actions; peradventure you are not carrying out this mandate or you are not in this fold then Jesus is calling you today to come back, submit your life to Him, consecrate yourself and devote your daily life for Him with covenanted life and sacrifice till he returns as the Scripture says in Psalm 50 vs 5 **'Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice'**.

I encourage you to seek God's face consistently and be obedient to His instructions not minding the cost or the unpleasant circumstances around you, stand strong, serve Him in truth and spirit then patiently wait on Him and He will manifest His glory in your life. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. Christian Chijoke Ngwu
Archdiocesan Chairman

Day 1: Sunday 31st December, 2023

RECAP OF YEAR 2023

On this day, we need to be thankful to God for sustaining and keeping us through the year. Certainly, there are some who wished and prayed to see the end of the year but sadly, they couldn't because of death.

The scripture says in 2 Corinthians 13 vs 5 *'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test'*? Apostle Paul's charge in this scripture is instructional for us as we prepare our heart to embark on another prayer journey.

Before we enter the year 2024, we must be deliberate in answering the following questions as we wind-up the year 2023:

- ✓ Was I faithful to observe a daily examination of conscience?
- ✓ Was I among the league of those who engaged in vain conversations rather than live quietly and peacefully? (1 Thes. 4 vs 11).
- ✓ What was the level of my commitment to God and to the people of God?
- ✓ Did I make spiritual progress?
- ✓ What effort did I make to build my capacity in my work place and business place?
- ✓ Who are the persons I am owing financially that I am yet to pay back?
- ✓ Who are the persons that I need to genuinely forgive?

Our ability to successfully answer the above questions will help us to end year 2023 well and also help us to begin the year 2024 on a firm footing. However, if there are areas that you need to address, the time is now. Beloved, do not enter the new year with any 'excess luggage'. The word of God in Hebrews 12 vs 2 says *'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us'*.

As you make up your mind to follow the Lord on this prayer journey which has the capacity to reorder your God-ordained destiny, keep your focus on Jesus and refuse to be distracted. God bless you.

DAILY PROPHETIC DECLARATION

I PRAISE YOU OH GOD FOR YOU ARE AWESOME IN YOUR SANCTUARY; YOU GIVE POWER AND STRENGTH TO YOUR PEOPLE. I COME BEFORE YOU THIS DAY IN SINCERITY OF HEART AND PURPOSE AND SEEK YOUR GRACE TO OCCUPY FOR YOUR KINGDOM WHEREVER I FIND MYSELF. HELP ME TO JUDGE WISELY THE THINGS OF EARTH AND HOLD FIRMLY TO THE THINGS OF HEAVEN.

AS I AGREE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT ON WHAT TO SOW FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF YOUR KINGDOM ON EARTH, I DECLARE THAT MY SEED SHALL WORK FOR ME AND EVERY MEMBER OF MY HOUSEHOLD. BY YOUR DIVINE HAND, I SHALL ACHIEVE WHAT HUMAN EFFORT CANNOT ACHIEVE.

THANK YOU FATHER FOR ANSWERED PRAYERS. AMEN.

WEEK ONE

JESUS PAID THE PRICE

(Rom. 5:8)

The story is told of a Catholic Priest, Maximilian Kolbe, born in Poland in 1894. He spent most of his life studying theology and dedicating himself to the Church, traveling across Europe and Asia during his lifetime. When World War II broke out, he was one of the few that remained with his monastery in Poland. Eventually it was shut down and he was arrested and later deported to Auschwitz. While in prison, three prisoners disappeared from the camp and were missing during roll-call. As a punishment, the officers rounded up 10 prisoners to be taken to an underground cell and starved to death. One prisoner pleaded with the officer that he had children and a family and the Priest, Kolbe, volunteered to take his place. The officers expected that he would die due to starvation but when they discovered he was still alive, they administered a lethal injection on him after which he died.

Child of God, the state mankind found itself after the fall of man was that of hopelessness. It was clear after the fall that neither man nor angel was fit enough to save man from sin and destruction. However, God's eternal plan is revealed in Romans 5 vs 8 which says, "*but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*". The scripture further reveals this love in John 3 vs 16 "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life*". The Priest in the story above took the place of one prisoner and died in his place but Jesus took our place and died our death that we may be saved from sin and destruction.

This week exposes us to the consequence of sin which is death and eternal separation and the need to trust in the power of the Cross of Christ in dealing with sin.

DAY 1: Monday 1st January, 2024

THE WAGES OF SIN (Romans 6:23)

A wage is the result we get from doing a particular thing, that is, the consequences of an action. Sin remains the devil's strongest weapon used to put man in constant enmity with God. The scripture in Genesis 3 vs 1 – 6 gives us an account of how the devil deceived man into going contrary to God's command. This deception eventually led to the fall of man.

It is important to state that sin takes away the glory and beauty of God from a person and strips one of divine authority and coverage. The greatest deception of our time is to believe that as fish cannot live without dwelling in water so a man cannot live without dwelling in sin. The penalty for a sinful life, as stated in Genesis 2 vs 17 and Romans 6:23, is death. The God-kind of life cannot dwell in a person who is dwelling in sin.

Dear friend, to live a sinful life, is to automatically disconnect oneself from God's grace and sustainability. This explains why there are so much pains, sicknesses, afflictions, wars, hardships and terror in our world today. The time is now to consider our ways and turn back to the Lord.

MEDITATION

- What am I passing through on account of my disobedience to God?
- Am I ready to confess and renounce my sins?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, have mercy upon me.
- I sincerely repent of all my sins.
- I confess and renounce them (Mention them by name)
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 2: Tuesday 2nd January, 2024

EFFECT OF SECRET SIN (Proverb 28 vs 13)

"Secret sins are the soul's diseases." -Saint Augustine.

The term 'secret sins' are those wrongs we commit in private or outside the knowledge of leaders, mentors, parents and other fellow believers. One can be tempted to feel comfortable in those sinful lifestyles because he feels no one sees but fails to realize that the eyes of the Lord watches all men and nothing is hidden from His sight, nor is sin concealed before His eyes. (Jeremiah 16 vs 17, Heb. 4 vs 13). It is important to state that whatever we do whether in the open or in secret, is not outside the knowledge of the Lord. God sees and judges our thoughts and actions. Psalm 90 vs 8 says even our remote sinful thoughts and imaginations are known to Him.

Secret sin can also be likened to rust on metals. The same way rust eats away metals so too does secret sin corrodes and gradually eats away a soul. It limits the ability of a soul to soar higher in his/her walk with God. The dangerous effect of secret sin is that it is very deceptive; it conceals its poison until it spreads into every aspect of life. Secret sins, if not checked, can fester and multiply, thus, robbing one of inner peace and communion with God.

Beloved in Christ, secret sinful practices such as masturbation, homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, lust, lies, envy, and the likes are the major reasons for struggles and stagnation in the life of believers. It is one trick of the devil that works like slow poison which kills eventually. Proverbs 28:13 says, *'Whoever conceals his sins will not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy'*.

MEDITATION

- Have you been caught in the web of secret sin?
- What are those secret sins that are prevalent in your life?
- Are you ready to reject and renounce them?
-

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, grant me the grace to deal with every occasion of secret sin.
- Oh Lord, through the power of the cross of Christ, deliver me from the grip and hold of secret sin.
- My Father! deliver and set me free from the hold of sin.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 3: Wednesday 3rd January, 2024

DEPTH OF THE FATHER'S LOVE (John 3:16 & Luke 19:10)

L*et us make man in our image....'* (Gen. 1 vs 26), best describes the depth of the Father's love. David, in deep revelation, understood this when he said in Psalm 8 vs 4-5, *"What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor"*. However, this is not the end of it. When Adam and Eve fell out of God's first offer of love, God didn't abandon the human race but rather displayed a higher love; and like St. John Chrysostom puts it, *"He emptied Himself of His glory so that you might share in His divinity."* God took the nature of man so that humanity can be restored to the first love of the Father. The summary of the mystery of salvation is centered on the love of the Father which we see in John 3 vs 16 and in Luke 19 vs 10 which says *'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'*.

Beloved, make up your mind today to respond to the Father's love. Turn from your wicked ways and embrace Him.

MEDITATION

- Have you really experienced the depth of the Father's love?
- Are you ready to reciprocate His love towards you?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, have mercy on me for the many times I have taken your love for granted.
- Thank you Lord, for this great love.
- Spend some minutes in worship and adoration to the Lord for His love.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 4: Thursday 4th January, 2024

TRUE RETURN TO THE FATHER (Luke 15:17 Hosea 6:1-3, 14:1-2)

We live in a generation today where almost everything is cosmetic and superficial, including relationship with God. The matter of returning to God is one that must be taken with a sense of urgency and done in sincerity given the looming reality of the end of this age.

Saint Teresa of Ávila said *"In whatever state a soul may be, it ought to be able to find a way of returning to God, and it ought never to be discouraged"*. The story of the prodigal son and the loving father is a clear pointer to the fact that each second, God awaits the return of His children. No matter how far you may feel you have gone from God, don't be discouraged. The moment you realize your disconnection from God and take the decision to return, the Father is willing to embrace you into His arms. Psalm 51 vs 17 gives us key to true return, *"A broken and a contrite heart, these you will not despise."* God will never turn away His eyes from those who willingly return to Him. God hates sin; however, He does not hate the sinner. The moment you decide to live in sin, you automatically distance yourself from God. But today, His door of mercy is open; don't let this golden opportunity to be wasted.

Your act of disobedience doesn't move God an inch from you; it is rather you that moves many steps out of His presence. That is why the prophecy of Hosea 6 vs 1 calls on us to return now to God. The door of mercy is still

widely open. The beauty of God's mercy is that it can never be exhausted as St. Francis of Assisi puts it: *"God's mercy is infinite, and no sinner, no matter how great their offenses, should despair of forgiveness, but should return to Him with a contrite heart."*

Beloved, now is the time, return to Him

MEDITATIONS

- Am I ready to arise and go back to my Father?
- Am I ready to forsake the life of deceit and deception?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, take me as I am.
- Cleanse me of all my sins.
- Restore your love in my heart, oh God.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

NOTE: ALL ARE ENCOURAGED TO GO FOR SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION

DAY 5: Friday 5th January, 2024

THE POWER OF THE CROSS (1 Peter 2:24)

The Holy Cross is a symbol of human salvation. The Lord and Master Jesus Christ accepted death on the Cross so that we can attain the full measure of our status in God and thereby assume the position of sons and daughters-heirs of the kingdom. On the Cross, Jesus obtained for us forgiveness of sin and deliverance from eternal condemnation, without which we would have remained perpetual enemies of God, cut off from His grace, and denied a place with God in eternity.

The Cross guarantees victory over sin, Satan, and death. We look upon the Cross for the strength to overcome the tricks of the evil one. Our Lord Jesus Christ took our wounded state to the Cross, and offered all-round

healing to us. Therefore, we have access to spiritual, bodily, material, mental, psychological and moral healing. By the same Cross, we derive power to be transformed into the image of the Christ (1 Corin. 1:18), exercising once again authority and dominion on the earth.

MEDITATION

- Have you realized the power of the cross?
- Have I crucified my lustful desires to the cross?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, help me to put to death all lustful desires of the flesh.
- Lord Jesus, help me to take up my cross daily to follow you.
- Uphold me with your hand oh Lord.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 6: Saturday, 6th January, 2024

LOOKING UNTO JESUS (Hebrews 12:1-6)

Jesus did not only come into the world to die for our sins but also to show us the perfect way to live a balanced Christian life. Hebrews 12 vs 1 – 6 says, *'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...'* The charge for every believer is to fix his/her eyes on Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is a practical example of everything He taught. He allowed Himself to pass through suffering and patiently endured the Cross in order to lead the way of salvation. Our gaze therefore, must be on Him (Acts 4:12). The world is a compendium of many realities. There are many distractions and attractions in all spheres of life. As a believer, in any sphere you find yourself, understand that you are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses and you must continue to daily contend with the

issues of life such as the struggle to make it at all costs, family and personal needs, and the likes. Sometimes these desires tend to hold tightly to you and try to come between you and God. Jesus did not allow anything to come between him and his mission on earth, and neither should you. Despite the painful experience He went through, He endured them all for the joy of what laid ahead. St. Paul tells us in Romans 8:18 that the hardship and pain we go through now are nothing compared to the glory that lies ahead. Let us keep resisting and keep looking unto Jesus, even if it means the shedding of our blood.

MEDITATION

- Who am I looking up to, Jesus or man?
- Are you aware that our Fathers of the faith also went through what you are going through now?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, help me to keep my gaze on you at all times.
- Lord Jesus, give me the courage to keep pressing on even in the face of difficulties.
- Set my heart on fire for you oh Lord.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 7: Sunday 7th January, 2024

SAVED BY GRACE (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"Grace is not obtained by human endeavor, but by the free gift of God's mercy." - St. Augustine of Hippo

The simple definition of grace is God doing for you what you cannot do by yourself. Following the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity assumed a fallen state. A state of helplessness and depravity which even the strongest of men may not be able to help himself. In this state, sin has the capacity to rule over humanity as Satan gains right to possess, influence, and torment his victims. By the nature

inherited from Adam, we became sharers of the depraved nature. However, God, out of love for mankind, made an escape route to save those who would accept His loving offer of grace through faith.

Faith opens the door of grace to us. While grace is the gateway to salvation, faith remains the only channel through which one can access the grace of salvation. Whatever you don't believe can never work for you. Everyone who desires to be saved must believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths that Jesus Christ is Lord and that He died on the Cross, not only to take away sins but to arm us against the power of sin and Satan. At baptism, we receive the grace to operate in the original nature lost in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Baptism therefore, arms us with Christ-like nature to live a holy life through the help of the Holy Spirit. Sin no longer rules but grace at work (Romans 6:14). This is our inheritance in Christ, you too can become a partaker. Colossians 1 vs 13 says, *'He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son'*.

MEDITATION

- Am I relying on my effort or on God's grace?
- Are you aware that by strength shall no man prevail?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, release your grace upon my life.
- Lord Jesus, make me a channel of your grace.
- Father set me on fire for you.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

WEEK TWO

THE IMPACT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (John 14:25-26)

During the period of Christ's ministry on the earth which lasted for three and half years, He was with His disciples showing them the reason for His coming and guided them to follow in His footsteps. When it was time for Him to go back to His Father, He re-assured them that they would not be alone. John 14 vs 25-26 says, *"I am telling you these things now while I am still with you but when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative, that is the Holy Spirit, He will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you"*. Child of God, we are privileged that the Holy Spirit is here with us now. As we make progress in our prayer this week, the Holy Spirit will be making Himself clearer to us so that we will walk more intimately with Him in fulfilling our purpose in Christ.

DAY 1: Monday 8th January, 2024

I WILL SEND YOU THE ADVOCATE (John 14:25-26)

It is possible that you may be finding life difficult as a believer. There are some believers who, on account of diverse trials and persecution, have ended up saying "I can't continue like this". The Lord Jesus Christ foresaw all these while He was with His disciples and He made this promise to them, **"I WILL SEND YOU THE ADVOCATE"**. Friends in Christ, you are not alone in all the struggles of life you are going through. There is someone whose presence is so real and is ever ready to speak for you. He is your comforter in times of difficulties. He is the person of the Holy Spirit. Could it be that you are having challenges understanding the scriptures; just ask Him for the interpretation, for He is your teacher. Make Him your friend and you will never regret it.

MEDITATION

- Do you believe in the person of the Holy Spirit?

PRAYERS:

- Father thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit.
- Spirit of the Living God come into my life and reign.
- Oh Lord, be my strength in time of weakness.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 2: Tuesday 9th January, 2024

YOU WILL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE (Matt 3:11, Act 19:1-7)

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, we are cleansed from original sin and made members of the Church. However, in Matthew 3 vs 11c, John makes it clear that aside being a member of the Church, there is need to operate on a higher dimension of grace. He says, '*...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*'. We all know that nothing goes into the fire and come out the same, and hence, through the Holy Ghost Baptism we are now carriers of the nature and power of Christ.

In Act 19 vs 1-7, Paul saw some believers in Ephesus and noticed that something was missing in the discharge of their ministry and he put this question to them. *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"* It is because the impact that is expected of a believer was lacking in them. Today this same question is being directed to us, is there any difference between you and an unbeliever in terms of character, prayer life, manifestation of God's glory, etc?

MEDITATION

- Have you genuinely encountered the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

- Have your way in my life oh Holy Spirit.
- Let your fire fall afresh on me.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 3: Wednesday 10th January, 2024

PERSONAL INTIMACY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 13:1-2; Acts 10:9-13)

Our relationship with the Holy Spirit is not expected to be optional. In other words, it is essential in having a smooth walk with God. It is the Holy Spirit that enables a man to be successful, devoted and committed in discharging our calling and responsibilities as given to us by God. Therefore, a man's intimacy with the Holy Spirit cannot be over-emphasized. Our relationship with Him is crucial for our success in everything both in life and ministry. Jesus in John 15 vs 5 says, without Him we can do nothing. He also says in John 14 that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead us into all truth. Our intimacy with Him helps us to define God's purpose for our lives and fulfill same.

We see in Acts 13 vs 1-2 where the Holy Spirit declares that Barnabas and Saul should be set apart for the work for which He called them. Again, in Acts 10 vs 9-13 we discover that the Holy Spirit is not discriminatory. This implies that the Holy Spirit works and relates with whoever that is ready and has set himself or herself apart for Him. Brethren, the charge today is that we develop a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit who is our advocate and helper in any situation we find ourselves. For you to succeed, you must have a personal and intimate walk and relationship with the Holy Spirit.

MEDITATION

- Do you have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit?

- What are those sins and lifestyles hindering your relationship with the Holy Spirit?
- Are you ready to make amends and begin a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, forgive my carelessness and sins that have cut me away from the Holy Spirit.
- I receive the grace to begin a fresh and personal relationship with the Holy Spirit.
- O Lord disconnect me from any lifestyle that will hinder my continuous relationship with the Holy Spirit and help me to be committed to this relationship.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 4: Thursday 11th January, 2024

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (1Cor 12:1 – 11).

A gift is some quality or endowment given to man by God. It is naturally deposited in a man without any charge attached. Sometimes, it can manifest itself as a talent. However, the gift of the Holy Spirit is an endowment of supernatural ability to perform or carry out certain functions or activities without stress or struggle and it is freely given by God. God bestows these different gifts on us through His Spirit and this is evident in diverse manifestations.

In 2 Cor. 12 vs 1-11, the scripture explains clearly the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit. The uniqueness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is that, it is freely given by God, and as such, the person who is blessed with such gifts is expected to manifest them for the good of the body of Christ without using same for exploitation. These gifts distinguish a man and also confirms God's calling upon a man. It is also a medium of differentiating His people from a natural man. It is used for the growth of

the Church and betterment of the members of the body of Christ. We are charged to desire these gifts not for selfish, personal use but rather for the betterment of the entire body of Christ. God is ever-ready and generous to release these gifts to whoever desires to have them (Matt. 7:11). The question we need to answer now is that how many of these gifts do we have and how effective have we been able to put them into use?

MEDITATION

- Do you have any gifts of the Holy Spirit in you?
- If yes, how often do you put it to use?
- Is the gift of the Holy Spirit in you used for your personal gain or for the growth of the Church and the body of Christ?
- Are you cooperating with the Holy Spirit, the giver of these gifts, to enable you grow?

PRAYER

- I repent of every negligent and negative attitude in exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit in me.
- Grant me the grace and opportunity to manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit in me.
- Fan into flame your gifts in me Lord, and the wisdom to use them maximally.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 5: Friday 12th January, 2024

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Gal. 5:22-23)

The fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. John 15 vs 5 (NLT) says, *“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me and I in them, will produce much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing”*. If you have not been able to go through life's challenges with perfect patience and endurance, looking unto Jesus as author and finisher of your faith, then,

you may not be able to produce the desired fruit expected by God.

A fruitless Christian is a serious contradiction to the body of Christ. It is a clear indication that such a man is yet to sit at the feet of Christ and learn from Him who is gentle and lowly in heart (Matt 11 vs 29).

It is a known fact that a good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit. However, the issue of bearing of fruit is not one that happens spontaneously. It takes a period of time under various forms of testing and trials. The fruit of the Spirit mentioned in our scriptural text is what truly defines a Christian. It is what Heaven earnestly seeks for in the life of a baptized Christian.

MEDITATION

- Which fruit am I bearing? Fruit of the Holy Spirit or that of the flesh?

PRAYER

1. Oh Lord, help me by your grace to bear the fruit of the Spirit.
2. Heavenly Father, reveal to me areas where I am lacking the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
3. Oh Lord my God, help me to prioritize the fruit of the Spirit even as I desire the gifting of the Spirit.
4. Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
5. Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 6: Saturday 13th January, 2024

FILLED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH (Luke 1:34-35a)

We cannot carry out the work of God or fulfil the will of God for our calling until we are filled with the power from on high; which is the Holy Spirit. The Blessed Virgin Mary asked the Angel in our scriptural text *'how can this be, since I don't know a man'* (Luke 1:34). The Blessed Virgin Mary was the first to be filled with this same power from on high. For anyone who must witness for Christ, he must first and foremost be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, knowing the enormity of the task before the Apostles and the challenges they would face, charged them to remain in Jerusalem till they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1-8). Aside the physical confrontations the Apostles would be faced with, Jesus was also aware of the spiritual battles that was awaiting them. Child of God, you may have been facing a lot of physical and spiritual battles and it seems there is no hope in sight. There is hope for you. The power of the Holy Spirit is able to address all issues confronting you right now.

Just as the Blessed Virgin Mary carried the Lord Jesus Christ in her womb and earned a good testimony during a visit to her cousin Elizabeth, we too must agree with God to be carriers of the Holy Spirit and bear testimony to the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION

- Am I ready to surrender to His will and allow Him to take over?
- Have I realized the importance of the Holy Spirit as my Helper and all that I need to succeed?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, thank you for the gift of your Spirit in my life.
- Oh Holy Spirit, I depend on you, fill me with power from on-high.
- Oh Holy Spirit, let there be an evidence of your presence in my life.
- Help me Father by the Power of your Spirit to fulfil your will and purpose on earth.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 7: Sunday 14th January, 2024

WITNESSING FOR CHRIST (Acts 1:8)

The whole essence of the Christian life is to bear witness to the risen Lord and His finished work on the Cross. Through witnessing, we are able to bring the lost and dying souls to God's

kingdom. A witness therefore, is someone who testifies to the deeds he has seen, the words he has heard, and the events at which he was present. The scripture confirms that in 1 John 1 vs 1 ***“This is what we proclaim to you, what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and our hands have touched concerning the Word of Life”***.

You cannot witness to what you have not seen or heard. God's instructions are clear ***“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roof”*** (Matt 10:27-28). The good Lord desires that His death on the Cross would not be in vain for all of mankind. He is looking forward to seeing the fruit of His suffering on the Cross. That is why there is a clarion call for all to witness for Christ in these perilous times.

There are many ways to bear witness of the risen Lord and His finished work on Calvary and among them are:

- Personal life: The way we live our life before others will win them to Christ.
- Electronic Media: Television and Radio.
- Social Media: WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.
- Print Media: News Paper, Tracts, Journals, Magazines etc.
- Bus Evangelism and Morning Cry.
- Evangelical Outreach (especially rural outreach)
- Crusade, etc.

Men are going to Hell every day and we will be held accountable for refusing to reach out to them about the good news of the gospel, which is the saving power of God to men. Beloved in Christ, let us wake up to our responsibility for God is waiting on us.

MEDITATION

- When last did I witness for Christ?
- Is soul winning a priority for me?

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

- Ensure you talk to at least one person daily about Christ.
- Avoid every form of excuse and procrastination because you do not have eternity to fulfil this mandate.

PRAYER

- Pray for the lost souls, that the grace of repentance and the light of God for salvation will shine on them.
- Lord, Jesus, strengthen me to preach your Word without fear or procrastination.
- Help me Lord Jesus, to have hunger for the lost.
- Lord God, let your burden keep on burning in my heart.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

WEEK THREE

ADVANCING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(Matthew 28:19 – 20)

In our world today, so many happenings around us tend to take our focus from what is eternal to things that are temporal even as Christians. The hardship we are also experiencing as a people causes us to sometimes think of adopting the popular slogan *'if you can't beat them, then join them'*.

However, that should not be the case amongst those called by God. As Jesus was leaving the disciples after His earthly ministry, He left them with a charge in the gospel of Matthew 28 vs 19 – 20: *'Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...'* All who have been baptized are expected to carry out this divine mandate through which the Kingdom of God is advanced on earth. You may be tempted to ask where and how you can advance the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God can be advanced in your work place, business environment, school environment, place of residence, cultural affiliation, social media, political groups, etc. There is a great spiritual and physical contentions in these areas mentioned on whether God or the devil will rule and reign.

Consequently, a man who will advance the course of God's Kingdom on earth is one who has come to terms with God's call upon his life. He is not moved by the temporary things of earth but rather, is focused on that which is eternal. Such a man is whom Heaven is looking out for.

DAY 1: Monday 15th January, 2024

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION (2 Cor. 5:18-19)

The word 'reconciliation' is usually introduced when there is a strain in fellowship between two or more people. In the beginning, man enjoyed a wonderful fellowship with God but

sadly, this was strained on account of the devil's work and man's cooperation with the devil. The devil, knowing fully well that man was created to serve and bring glory to God, keeps working round the clock to ensure that man is constantly in enmity with God.

The scripture in 2 Cor 5 vs 18 – 19, gives us a description of God's redemptive plan towards man and the charge upon all who have taken a decision to follow Jesus Christ. No man is saved from sin and destruction with the sole aim of abiding alone. Rather, God's intention is for such a man to reach out in love to souls that are perishing so that they too may come to discover His mercy and love. It is instructional to consider verse 19 of our bible text. It says *'that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation'*. The depth of God's love is once more revealed here, in that, through the finished work of Jesus on the Cross, our sins have been forgiven and we have been given the privilege of becoming children of God.

Any man who has genuinely encountered the Lord Jesus Christ sees it as a necessity to share his experience wherever he finds himself. He testifies of God's mercies and love, not forgetting that there is a judgment at the end of time. He seeks to pursue peace with all men at all times, as well as holiness, knowing that without such, no eye shall see the Lord. The heart of such a man bleeds when he sees a man walking the road of destruction. His yearning and desire are to reconcile any man that comes his way with the Lord Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION

- Are you aware that God has entrusted to you the ministry of reconciliation?
- What efforts have you made in the past and what effort do you intend to make to witness for Christ?
- What practical effort are you making to advance the kingdom of God?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, help me to experience your love and mercy.
- Pray for the grace to effectively discharge the ministry of reconciling men back to God.
- Oh Lord, help me to make good use of every opportunity I have for the advancement of your Kingdom.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 2: Tuesday 16th January, 2024

THE TRUE DISCIPLE - KINGDOM LIFESTYLE (1 Tim. 4:12-16)

The word 'disciple' is from the Greek word mathetes meaning 'pupil/student of the master'. However, for the purpose of the message of the day, a disciple is one who makes a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be a follower of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to him/her.

It is sad to find in our day, people who profess Christ but do not have a firm and conscious decision to follow Christ. For such persons, they are still controlled by the desires of the flesh and the love of the world. A clear manifestation is their obedience to the desires of the flesh over the promptings and leading of the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul in 1 Timothy 4 vs 12 – 16, declares; *'Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity...'*. The word of God gives a clear description of the virtues anyone who professes Christ is expected to manifest. These virtues grow daily as a man takes a conscious and deliberate decision to follow Jesus. A true test to check if you are truly a disciple can be determined if your tongue has been circumcised, if your life has been offered as a living sacrifice to God, if your love is genuine, if you are faithful, and if you desire and pursue after righteousness and holiness.

A disciple's goal in all that he does, is to become like the master Jesus Christ in character, in learning, in thought, in speech and in living. He does not seek to promote himself but rather he promotes his Master whom he serves. For such kind of disciples, wherever they go, those they come in contact with are able to testify who their Master is.

MEDITATION

- Do you know that to be a true disciple, a conscious and deliberate effort is required to follow Jesus Christ?
- Are you aware that a true disciple is expected to reflect the life of Jesus?
- Do you know that discipleship entails consistent following till God calls you home?
- Do you know that a disciple seeks to become more and more like Jesus?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, grant me the grace to follow you daily.
- Oh Lord, grant me the grace to tarry with you in the place of prayer and in the study of you word.
- Oh Lord, help me to pursue the virtue of holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 3: Wednesday 17th January, 2024

CORPORATE ANOINTING (Acts 4:24-31 & Heb. 10:25)

One of the aftermaths of the COVID-19 pandemic is the decline in spiritual fervor among some Christians. At the moment, some brethren no longer see the need to be regular at gatherings meant to build their spiritual walk with God.

Acts 4 vs 24 – 31 gives us a clear picture of the challenges faced by the Apostles when ordered not to spread the gospel of Christ. The threats

they received were not sufficient enough to deter them from the goal of advancing the Kingdom of God. Rather, they gathered together to pray as well as seek the face of God.

You may have lost spiritual fervor over the past few years and have remained the way you are. You may have lost interest in spiritual gatherings possibly because a Pastor, fellow brother or sister may have caused you pain. You may have concluded in your mind that God is no longer interested in coming to your aid. Child of God, this is not the season to solely depend on what you can do by yourself all alone. There is a special kind of grace that abounds when brethren gather together in sincerity to seek the face of God.

Hebrews 10 vs 25 declares; *'not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the day approaching'*. It is important for us to heed to this charge and revive the culture of gathering together to pray and to seek the face of God. There is a saying that no man is an island; we all need one another especially in our walk with God. Proverbs 27 vs 17 holds; *'As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another'*.

MEDITATION

- Have you lost spiritual passion for the gathering of God's people?
- Has someone hurt you to the point where you no longer see the need to fellowship with God's people?
- Have you given up on God?
- Do you know that God is still in the business of doing great things amongst His people?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, grant me the grace to look to you at all times.
- Oh Lord, grant me total recovery and restoration.
- Oh Lord, deliver me from the spirit of individualism.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 4: Thursday 18th January, 2024

EVANGELIZATION THROUGH THE SOCIAL MEDIA (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 4:29; Rom. 1:16)

The world we live in is described as a global village. Every day, we see technological advancement that beats the imagination of man. It is no longer news that the social media space is almost overtaking the conventional media space. Many people are on the social media space through diverse platforms like Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, Tiktok, Telegram Snapchat and the likes.

The common trend we find in our day is that of people making videos of themselves and placing it on these social media platforms for the world to see. Taking a close look at these videos, it would be observed that we end up promoting ourselves and business and not Christ. The word of God says in 2 Cor. 5 vs 20a *'We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us...'*. The role of an Ambassador is given to one who knows what it takes to advance the course of his country in a foreign land. It is important to emphasize that we are all pilgrims on earth and a clear understanding of our roles as Ambassadors is key if we must advance God's Kingdom on earth through the social media.

Today's message calls us to effectively use all social media platforms to promote and advance the Kingdom of God. For a very long time you have either promoted yourself or business on the social media space but now, the time has come to also promote the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul says in Romans 1 vs 16 *'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile'*. If St. Paul who did not have a smart phone, saw the need to advance God's kingdom without fear or shame, then we have no excuse to give since we have a platform in our hands from where we can advance the Kingdom of God.

MEDITATION

- Are you addicted to the social media negatively?
- Is your goal to promote self and business only through the social media space or the Lord Jesus?
- Are your activities on the social media space just for personal gain?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, give me a deeper understanding of your calling upon my life.
- Help me Lord, to promote you more in the social media space.
- Grant me the heart of wisdom to put to good use the technological advancement around me.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 5: Friday 19th January, 2024

THE GOSPEL OVER CULTURAL BELIEFS (Mark 7:1-13)

The scripture, in Mark 7 vs 1-13, shows the disappointment of some Pharisees and teachers of the religious laws with Jesus and His disciples. The reason for their disappointment was on the basis that the disciples of Jesus were negligent of the Jewish laws of physical observances and regulations. For them, righteousness is measured through the adherence of the mosaic laws which were tilted towards outward appearances. Jesus however, rebuked them for their insistence on outward observances and denying the spiritual aspect which is more important to us as Christians. For Jesus, a man is not made right with God through those observances, rather a pure and contrite heart does (Jer. 4 vs 3-4 & Isa. 66 vs 2b).

In our time, many of us pay more attention to our societal, cultural beliefs as well as what we inherited from our fore fathers as against the biblical teaching which is a divine rule or law and through which we can please and be in good standing with God. Most of these cultural practices, if not

all, place on us demands which are demonic and satanic in nature. If we choose to live in consonance with them, then we make ourselves enemies of the Cross of Christ. Most often, when it comes to marriages, burials and some cultural festivities like masquerade ceremonies which are demonic, some of us are still deeply involved and as a result, we still uphold practices which are against the Christians beliefs and our faith in Christ. Some of us are living with our spouses in accordance with the norms, beliefs and practices of our cultures.

The scripture says in 2 Corinthians 5 vs 17; ***“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”*** (KJV). This implies that the moment one is converted, he or she is disconnected from all negative and demonic cultural beliefs and practices and his or her new cultural practices and beliefs should be those that are godly and capable of drawing more people and souls to Christ. You cannot be a baptized Christian and at the same time aligning with what is of the devil's.

MEDITATION

- What are those ungodly cultural beliefs that are colliding with the Christian faith?
- Are you practicing what the Church teaches or what is widely accepted in your culture?
- Are you ready to turn away from demonic cultural practices?
- In moments where your cultural beliefs contradict the teachings of the Church, which one do you follow?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, help me to disconnect myself from all beliefs that are ungodly.
- Help me Lord, to accept wholeheartedly what the Church teaches.
- Grant me your grace to subdue ungodly societal influence.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 6: Saturday 20th January, 2024

PERSECUTION AND TRIALS (2Tim. 3:11-12; 2 Tim. 4:5; Acts 14:21-23)

In our walk with God, persecutions and trials are necessary components in our journey towards eternity. St. Paul in 2 Timothy 3 vs 11-12 says, *“You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra- but the Lord rescued me from all of it. Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (NLT). Persecutions and trials reflect the way of the Cross. The Cross is the center of our faith, without which it is difficult to claim one is a Christian. Jesus made it known in Luke 9 vs 23, when He was addressing the crowd that whoever wants to be His follower must deny self, take up his/her Cross and follow Him daily. It therefore means, persecutions and trials are necessary ingredients of a Christian life.

However, St. Paul, still in 2 Timothy 4:5, encourages us to be wise and endure all suffering as we carry out our Christian duties and calling. Jesus also encourages us when He says in John 16:33, *“... Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world”* (NLT). It therefore implies that as Christians, trials and persecution are part of our journey in our walk with God. But Jesus Himself strengthens our faith in the above scripture when He says He has overcome the world. Therefore, we too are overcomer in Him. St. Paul also in his letter to the Romans 8 vs 37 says, *“... despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us”* (NLT). The Kingdom of God is not only bread and butter or eating and drinking, rather it is a product of travails and overcoming challenges. This is why St. Paul in Acts 14 vs 21-23, encouraged the believers in many towns and cities they visited and made it clear to them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.

Today's scriptures draw our attention and encourage us to keep persevering and doing everything possible to keep standing in spite of the challenges we are facing as Christians. Matthew 24 vs 13 holds, *“But*

the one who endures to the end will be saved” (NLT). I charge you all to keep pressing on, for these persecutions and trials are momentary compared to the eternal crown reserved for those that will win at last (2 Cor. 4:17).

MEDITATION

- What trials are you going through for the sake of the gospel of Christ?
- Are you thinking that God has forgotten or abandoned you in life?
- Do you know that you are victorious in Christ Jesus?

PRAYER

- Lord, I hand over all my worries, trials, challenges, persecutions and troubles in life to you to take over.
- Oh Lord, make me victorious in life as I journey with you.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 7: Sunday 21st January, 2024

RUN TO THE FINISH LINE (Phil. 3:14).

Every child of God that embarks on this heavenly race must be prepared, ready and determined to run with focus in order to finish well. This is why St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27, writes that while many may compete or participate in a race, not all the contestants may run to the finish line. The above text draws our attention to the fact that if we must finish well or run to the finish line, then we must be ready and prepared to discipline ourselves. We must not get entangled with the affairs of this world nor its practices which are detrimental to our heavenly race. We must not in any way conform ourselves to the standards of this world (Rom. 12 vs 1-2).

The charge brethren, is to run the race marked out for us by God to the finish line (Heb. 12 vs 1). St. Paul, in Philippians 3 vs 14, laid before us an example and called us to imitate same as we journey to the eternal Kingdom which is devoid of corruption and decay. According to the

above scripture; *“I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus is calling us” (NLT)*. Our focus and determination are to finish well and strong because there is a prize awaiting us. St. Paul, in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, affirmed this when he says, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me – the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me on the day of His return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to His appearing” (NLT)*.

It is important to state that those who remain faithful and resolute in the face of myriads of challenges, difficulties and corruption bedeviling the world will receive a reward from God. This reward is not only on the last day, but also in this present life. Brethren, the charge again is to run with determination to the finish line this race set before us in the presence of many witnesses.

MEDITATION

- Are you still running the race God set out for you?
- What are your hindrances in the course of this heavenly journey?
- Are you running with determination and focus with the aim to win the prize?

PRAYER

- Lord, help me to be focused and determined in this heavenly race.
- Oh Lord, deliver me from distractions and worldly influences that may affect my race.
- Lord, may I not miss the crown that is awaiting every victor at the end of our earthly journey.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

WEEK FOUR

OCCUPY TILL I COME

(Luke 19:12-13)

Living for God and working for Him is comparable to the two sides of a coin. God has a life for us to live, and also work for us to do. Therefore, loving Jesus, trying to live a holy life, occupying a post in the Charismatic, Parish Laity Council, Parish Finance Committee or Parish Pastoral Council is not enough; we must be actively involved in our Father's business. This parable of a nobleman who distributed his money to his servants reveals to us God's purpose when we are involved in activities that promote His interests on earth. Before the noble man departed, he commanded his servants thus "*occupy till I come*" (Luke 19:13). His command revealed his expectation; he wanted the servants to do something with what they had received.

The term *occupy* in this parable means to be in-charge, to take responsibility, to trade or do business. It connotes the idea of using initial capital to turn in profit through various business activities. The parable shows God's expectations over the gifts He has given to us. God has given to each of his children one or more gifts. The initial capital represents the gifts God has given to us. The active trading represents engagement in spiritual activities tailored towards serving the people of God, while the profit represents the gains we make for the advancement of God's Kingdom.

This week we shall be discussing on the areas Christ is expecting us to show His glory which cuts across family life, business, work place, school and politics.

As children of God, we remain the only visible sign of God to others. We are the 'Bible' they will read; we are the sign posts for their direction, and the 'Christ' they will see daily (Acts 11:26). In Ephesians 1 vs 18, St. Paul prayed God for the people of Ephesus to come to the full knowledge of His calling upon their lives as well as understand the 'riches' he had

invested in them. It is important to state that it is not what we have that determines our reward but rather how well we put into good use what we have. The question we must quietly ponder to answer is this 'Are we using our time, talent and treasure selfishly, or are we using them to serve God and bless others? Time will Tell!

Remember, on the last day there will be no excuse, no litigation, only a just and fair reward.

DAY 1: Monday 22nd January, 2024

MARITAL FRUITFULNESS AND FAMILY BLESSING (Ps. 128:1-3)

At creation, God wanted a community of humans who will share in His blessings, glory and honor, and so he made them male and female. They were required to interlock with each other and be able to subdue the earth, and rule over it together in a marvelous partnership.

The blessing of God is a conferment of authority and power on a man and each family draws life through constant fellowship with God, for God is their light and source of existence (Psalm 27:1).

When the family dwells in the place of prayer and fellowship, the seed of fruitfulness is sown. It is expected for the husband and wife to be generous, and become channels of blessings for the entire human race.

So, the fruitfulness that we are talking about is not as a result of human effort, it is a consequence of the authority and power our Lord Jesus Christ had given us. We are to experience this all-round blessing and fruitfulness as long as we profess Jesus in our marital homes. Remember each family is a domestic Church.

MEDITATION

- Am I enjoying marital fruitfulness and blessing?
- How often do we fellowship with God as a family?
- Am I harboring unforgiveness and anger in my heart towards my

spouse?

- Am I training my children in the way of the Lord?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, may my family be fruitful.
- Lord, open my eyes to any sin that tends to remove my family from you.
- Help me to raise my children in the fear the Lord.
- Pray for families worldwide who have missed God's purpose for family life, including lone-parent families, and LGBTQ groups for God to show us mercy.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 2: Tuesday 23rd January, 2024

PROSPERITY IN WORK AND BUSINESS (Proverbs 14:23; Ps. 1:1-3; & Deut. 8:18).

Prosperity in work and business means succeeding, flourishing and making Kingdom impact in whatever our life preoccupation is. *“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things...”* (3 John 1:2). When Apostle John was addressing this issue, he exhorted the believers to be positive and productive in their mind and approach to life. When God said He will prosper the work of our hands, He meant that our hand must find something doing. It is the LORD that prospers men, but the speed at which it is achieved depends on one's mindset. As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is. Men are the reflection of their thoughts and imagination. Whatsoever drives your emotion actually takes you to your destination. You must believe that it is the will of God for you to prosper as a believer.

You may be wondering what you have to do to be prosperous. The first to do is to become a friend of Jesus, not a friend of evil counselors. Depending on God alone gives you an edge over all hindrances on your

path to prosperity, because He alone is able to guide our feet to places of blessing. Secondly, you must fear and obey God. Psalm 25:14 says, ***“Only those who fear Yahweh possess His secret and His covenant for their understanding”***. Also, consistent meditation on God's word by day and night will make one like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

MEDITATION

- Am I prospering in my work and business?
- Do I have faith in God?
- Is God first in my business, my work, my school and other engagements?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, bless the work of my hand.
- Father, give me the secrets of wealth and prosperity.
- Father, please give me the grace to obey you in all my business transactions.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 3: Wednesday 24th January, 2024

KINGDOM DOMINION IN POLITICS (Proverbs 29:2)

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: But when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn”. (The New Community Bible Catholic Edition)

It is clear from Proverb 29 vs 2 that political power has a significant role in birthing the purpose of God in the society. God desires that all men be saved and blessed. To reach a greater number of people, certain strategic political positions can influence the process of God reaching to a greater number of people. Hence, believers must not shy away from politics because no matter how righteous a man is, he is still affected directly or indirectly by the policies of those in governance.

Very importantly, good governance betters the lives of the generality of the people more than bad governance which is usually controlled by persons who are self-centered. God has given the believers the mandate to dominate the world, including politics (Gen. 1 vs 28). If the entire world must be saved, then believers must be involved in the governing structures in the world in order to drive God's purpose thereby establishing His reign in every sphere of human endeavours.

MEDITATION

- What effort am I making to help believers into political positions.
- Who do I represent in that position where I find myself?

PRAYER

- O Lord, raise men and women among us who will impact governance positively.
- Lord, break every barrier put in place in order to keep believers from attaining political positions.
- Help us oh Lord, to raise men after your heart in our politics.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 4: Thursday 25th January, 2024

THE WISE AND FAITHFUL SERVANT (Matt. 24 vs 45-47)

“Who then is the wise and trustworthy servant whom the master placed over his household to give them food at the proper time....” (JB)

As a wise and faithful servant, perhaps the most important quality is integrity. It is the foundation on which all other qualities are built. Proverbs 21 vs 3 is a reminder that Jesus calls us to walk in the way of righteousness and justice - our actions should reflect our faith. If we are true servants, we should not be involved in cheating, lying and manipulation in order to get to the top.

In the midst of life's challenges, God's abiding presence remains our only source of comfort. Wise servants recognize that struggles are real and life is difficult, but God is in control. They are resilient, have the ability to bounce back, push through and press on based on the truth that God grants the grace for perseverance and is able to keep us from stumbling.

As a child of God in school, how far have you gone in showing that you are a wise and faithful servant. What kind of company are you keeping? Who do your fellow student say you are? It will be an error that you graduated from that school with nothing impactful to be remembered for as God's ambassador.

Faithful servants refute falsehood, correct errors and give encouragement (2 Tim. 4 vs 2); they heal the wounded, and are patient with the apprehensive.

MEDITATION

- Am I a wise and faithful servant?
- Am I a source of encouragement to the believers and members of other religions?
- Do I love people just as Jesus loves me?
- When last did I visit those in Prison, Hospital and Orphanage?
- Do I really know those under my care?

PRAYER

- Lord, be merciful and give me another chance?
- Oh Lord, may my latter days be better than the former.
- Help me Lord, to change the things I can.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 5: Friday 26th January, 2024

REIGNING IN GLORY AND POWER (Acts 10:38)

The Bible says, *“God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil”* Acts 10:38. When we are led by the Spirit of God, our focus won't be on looking good, but on doing good.

Many of the evil things happening in our world today are caused by Satan and his demons, but our assurance is that in the name of Jesus, we will prevail. Reigning in glory and power is about taking charge and walking in dominion as was God's original plan for man in *Genesis 1 vs 26-28*. God does not want His Children to be subdued by situations and circumstances; therefore, He gave them authority to rule their world by demonstrating His power through them.

To have dominion is to reign, exercise authority and be in charge! As Christians, we are superior to Satan. We are not under the authority, dominion, jurisdiction, or powers of darkness; they can't affect us anymore. We have been called to reign in glory and power and to exercise our authority and dominion over Satan. We are called to make a demand in the name of Jesus. In Acts 3 vs 1- 6, the Bible shows us how Peter and John put this to work, and we are called to do the same.

MEDITATION

- Am I reigning in glory with Christ?
- Am I afraid of the circumstances of life, especially in this post-fuel subsidy era?
- How have I overcome sicknesses and diseases?

PRAYER

- Father, I need your gift of faith.
- Oh Lord, may your blood speak for me.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 6: Saturday 27th January, 2024**ARE YOU READY?** (Matt. 24:42).

Our reading today reminds us of the unpredictability of the second coming of Christ or our last day on earth. Our only saving grace is dependent on how ready we are. The greatest reason we fear death or the second coming of Christ is because we are not prepared for it. The Holy Scripture says, "*You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*" (Luke 12:40 (JB))

Matthew 25 vs 1-13 tells us of the only reason that denied the five (5) virgins their place at the marriage feast. The five virgins now called foolish virgins were prepared for the wedding but did not take cognizance of the time the wedding will start. Of course, they had their gorgeous wedding dresses, and must have sumptuously applied their 'make-ups' but very unfortunately, they did not prepare for the delay. Beloved, time is of essence. Today, we ask ourselves again, 'Are you ready?'

The Holy Spirit says in 2 Peter 3 vs 9 that the delay in Christ's return is due to the fact that God does not want anyone to perish but that all should come to repentance.

Therefore, what is required is to accept the offer of His atonement and live by the decrees of the new covenant which He sealed by His blood. Remember, "*without holiness no one shall see the Lord*" (Heb. 14 vs 12).

MEDITATION

- If Christ should come now to take His bride, will I be part of it?
- Can I identify those things that can disqualify me from being taken?
- What am I doing now to prepare myself for that day?

PRAYER

- Father, thank you for the truth in this message.
- I repent and confess my sins. Forgive me Lord.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

DAY 7: Sunday 28th January, 2024

OCCUPY TILL I COME (Luke 19:12-13)

“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.”

It is God's desire that all men be saved. This task of saving souls was given to us by God with the enabling graces we need for this assignment. So, the gift of family, finances, teaching, healing, job, business success, academic excellence given to us by God to populate His kingdom. We are called not just to live by marking time but to bring meaningful contribution to the business of the kingdom. We have been called to be caretakers in God's estate. To discharge our responsibility as caretakers, we must rely on God's ability to bring about the light of good will, justice, peace, and love which truly confirms that we are His disciples.

MEDITATION

- How has my life manifested this command, “Occupy till I come”?
- How have I promoted Christ in my family, village, town or among my friends?

PRAYER

- Oh Lord, may I not be found wanting on the last day.
- Lord, may I know the shortness of my life.
- Help me Lord, to make meaningful impact for your kingdom.
- Pray for ordained Ministers of God, that they may faithfully seek God in their activities and actions.
- Pray for the universal Church and our nation Nigeria.
- Pray as the Spirit leads you alongside other private intentions.

LITANY OF THE SAINTS

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
God, the Father of Heaven,
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Spirit,
Holy Trinity, one God,

Holy Mary,
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of Virgins,
St. Michael,
St. Gabriel,
St. Raphael,
All you Holy Angels and Archangels
St. John the Baptist,
St. Joseph,
All you Holy Patriarchs and Prophets,
St. Peter,
St. Paul,
St. Andrew,
St. James,
St. John,
St. Thomas,
St. James,
St. Philip,
St. Bartholomew,
St. Matthew,
St. Simon,
St. Jude,
St. Mathias,
St. Barnabas,

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.

pray for us.
pray for us.
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pray for us.

St. Luke,	pray for us.
St. Mark,	pray for us.
All you Holy Apostles and Evangelists,	pray for us.
All you Holy Disciples of the Lord,	pray for us.
All you Holy Innocents,	pray for us.
St. Stephen,	pray for us.
St. Lawrence,	pray for us.
St. Vincent,	pray for us.
St. Fabian and Sebastian,	pray for us.
St. John and Paul,	pray for us.
St. Cosmas and Damian,	pray for us.
All you Holy Martyrs,	pray for us.
St. Sylvester,	pray for us.
St. Gregory,	pray for us.
St. Ambrose,	pray for us.
St. Augustine,	pray for us.
St. Jerome,	pray for us.
St. Martin,	pray for us.
St. Nicholas,	pray for us.
All you Holy Bishops and Confessors,	pray for us.
All you Holy Doctors,	pray for us.
St. Anthony,	pray for us.
St. Benedict,	pray for us.
St. Bernard,	pray for us.
St. Dominic,	pray for us.
St. Francis,	pray for us.
All you Holy Priests and Levites,	pray for us.
All you Holy Monks and Hermits,	pray for us.
St. Mary Magdalene,	pray for us.
St. Agatha,	pray for us.
St. Lucy,	pray for us.
St. Agnes,	pray for us.
St. Cecilia,	pray for us.
St. Anastasia,	pray for us.
St. Catherine,	pray for us.

St. Clare,
All you Holy Virgins and Widows,
All you Holy Saints of God,

pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.

Lord, be merciful,
From all evil,
From all sin,
From your wrath,
From a sudden and unprovided death,
From the snares of the devil,
From anger, hatred and all ill-will,
From the spirit of uncleanness,
From lightning and tempest,
From the scourge of earthquake,
From plague, famine and war,
From everlasting death,
By the mystery of your Holy Incarnation,
By Your Coming,
By Your Birth,
By Your Baptism and Holy Fasting,
By Your Cross and Passion,
By Your Death and Burial,
By Your Holy Resurrection,
By Your wonderful Ascension,
By the coming of the Holy Spirit,
On the Day of Judgment,

Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
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Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.
Lord, save your people.

Be merciful to us sinners,
That you will spare us,
That you will pardon us,
That it may please you to bring us to
true penance,
Guide and protect your holy Church,
Preserve in holy religion the Pope,
and all those in holy Orders,

Lord, hear our prayer.
Lord, hear our prayer.
Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord, hear our prayer.
Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Humble the enemies of holy Church,	Lord, hear our prayer.
Give peace and unity to the whole	
Christian people,	Lord, hear our prayer.
Bring back to the unity of the Church	
all those who are straying, and bring all	Lord, hear our prayer.
unbelievers to the light of the Gospel,	
Strengthen and preserve us in your	Lord, hear our prayer.
holy service,	
Raise our minds to desire the things	Lord, hear our prayer.
of heaven,	
Reward all our benefactors with	Lord, hear our prayer.
eternal blessings,	
Deliver our souls from eternal	Lord, hear our prayer.
damnation, and the souls of our	
brethren, relatives, and benefactors,	Lord, hear our prayer.
Give and preserve the fruits of the	
earth,	Lord, hear our prayer.
Grant eternal rest to all the faithful	
departed,	Lord, hear our prayer.
That it may please You to hear and	
heed us, Jesus, Son of the Living God,	Lord, hear our prayer.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins	
of the world,	Spare us, O Lord!
Lamb of God, who takes away the	
sins of the world,	Graciously hear us, O Lord!
Lamb of God, who takes away the	
sins of the world,	Have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us,	Christ, graciously hear us
Lord Jesus, hear our prayer	Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.
Lord, have mercy on us	Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us	Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us	Lord, have mercy on us

LET US PRAY

Lord God, hear our petitions and give your help to this act of the ministry.
Amen.

MUST I GO, AND EMPTY-HANDED (CHB 140)

1. Must I go, and empty-handed,
Thus my dear Redeemer meet?
Not one day of service give Him,
Lay no trophy at His feet?

Chorus

*"Must I go, and empty-handed?"
Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him:
Must I empty-handed go?*

2. Not at death I shrink nor falter,
For my Savior saves me now;
But to meet Him empty-handed,
Thought of that now clouds my brow.
3. O the years in sinning wasted;
Could I but recall them now,
I would give them to my Savior,
To His will I'd gladly bow.
4. O ye saints, arouse, be earnest,
Up and work while yet 'tis day;
Ere the night of death o'ertake thee,
Strive for souls while still you may.

BYC NOTE

Lined area for writing notes, consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

LET US PRAY

NOTE

Lord God, hear our petitions and give your help to this land of the many.

Answer

1.

Must I go, and empty-handed?
Thou my dear Redeemer took?

Lay no burden on His feet?

Chorus

"Must I go, and empty-handed?"

Must I leave my Father's love?

Not one word with which to greet Him?

Must I empty-handed go?

2. Not at death I shrink nor falter,

When my dear Redeemer calls;

But to meet Him, empty-handed,

Thoughts of His love shall give me joy.

3. O the years by sinning wasted;

How I would give them to my Savior!

To His will I gladly bow.

4. O ye sinner, awake, be earnest,

Ere the night of death o'ertake thee.

Save thy soul while thou mayest.

OCCUPY TILL I COME

For your principal to hand over the affairs of his office to you, it means that you have been fully equipped to be able to carry out the responsibilities required of such position.

The theme for this 20th edition of the Prayer Project titled '**OCCUPY TILL I COME**', taken from the gospel of Luke 19 vs 12-13, reminds us about our responsibilities as believers in spreading the gospel of salvation through every aspect of human endeavours. It is even more urgent now as the message of salvation has since been relegated to the back seat. We are to use every available means to carry out this assignment.

In the Book of Genesis 1 vs 28, the scripture reveals God's intention for creating man; He blessed him and said unto him '*Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it and have dominion*'. It is therefore, our responsibility to dominate for God where ever we find ourselves starting from our Family, School, Business/Work Place, Politics, Education, etc.

No man can dutifully carry out this assignment by human wisdom and strength. However, the Holy Spirit who abides in us, gives us the enablement to do exploit for God.

How will your report card look like when the Master returns? Let's make ourselves available in fulfilling this mandate so that the return of the Master will not take us by surprise.

Welcome to 2024 and Happy New Year.

Shalom!

Chairman, Planning Committee

