

Sent by Jesus to preach, teach and heal
The church's mission to the whole person
Sermon at Diocesan Convention, Oct. 13, 2007
Bishop Anthony Poggo, Diocese of Kajo-Keji
Isaiah 2:2-4, Ephesians 2:13-22, Luke 10:1-9

Introduction

It is my pleasure to speak to you this morning. I would like to thank Bishop Paul for inviting me to be present at this important Convention and also for asking me to speak at this Eucharist. The theme of our talk this morning is "For the Mission of the Church". Let me begin by making some definitions.

What is Mission?

One of the definitions given by the Oxford Dictionary is "the work of teaching people about Christianity, especially in a foreign country". The other definition is "particular work that you feel it is your duty to do". I would like to see the concept of Mission in a much broader context than just teaching Christianity. It is teaching Christianity, living it and ministering in a holistic way or integral way i.e. meeting the needs of the body, soul and spirit.

In our Gospel reading, we read the story of how Jesus sent 72 people to go ahead of him into all the towns and places where he was about to go. He wanted them to be part of His mission to the world. He told them that although the harvest is plentiful, there are few workers, but that the Lord who is the Lord of the Harvest is the one who sends the workers. He sent them to **preach, teach and heal**, that is, to undertake the wholistic mission of meeting the **spiritual and physical needs**. .

In v. 4, he instructs them not to take any purse or bag. Theirs was to rely on Him. When we receive God's call, we should answer His call. Our response should be "here I am send me". The modern trend is that when we are hired to do a job, we negotiated what our remuneration is. As Christian workers this should not be the main reason why we do what we do. We should see it as our ministry to that Lord. He will provide us as we undertake it. Recently, I came to make this realisation that when God gives you a vision for a mission, he provides. When God is for a vision, i.e. if he is "pro" a vision. He will provide the provision, because he is "pro" the "vision" – hence the English word "provision". Many of our pastors in the Diocese of Kajo-Keji have been volunteers for the last 20 years.

From vv. 5 to 6, Jesus says that the message preached should be the message of peace, the message of the Kingdom. In v. 7 He again says rely on the people who I am sending you to. Eat what they eat. According to v.9, the Preaching of the good news should also include the healing of the sick. This can happen through prayers or through ministry through medical field. When they came back, there was excitement. Jesus said they should rejoice that their names are written in heaven. We have been giving the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:18-20**. This is His mission through us; we are in a "co-mission" that is to say that we "co-workers" or working together with him.

Does the Mission of the Church include a Social Concern in Ministry?

As I mentioned before, I believe that the Mission of the Church should be to the whole person namely **body, soul and spirit** in other words meeting the **spiritual and physical** needs of the disciple. Hence Jesus sent his disciples to teach, heal and preach. When Jesus embarked on his ministry, he gave an address in Nazareth in **Luke 4:18-19**. This is what he said:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to released the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour

This verse has been referred to as the **Nazarene Manifesto**. It is our manifesto as Christians. Luke 4:18 says that Jesus' ministry was aimed not only at the spiritual need, but both physical and spiritual. Preaching of the good news should be holistic. You cannot go and preach the good news and leave the person to die due from lack of food.

During the war many places in Sudan experienced a real meaning to the Lord's Prayer especially where we pray, "**Give us this day our daily bread**". This is because it meant a lot as they prayed it in reality. In other parts of the world, this is not the case, as often one would have such bread in the fridge or nearest supermarket. James argues in his letter that **our faith should be seen in our good work**. This means that the mission of the Church should be a mission to the whole person.

The recent launch of the **New Hope** campaign is indeed one of the ways that the Diocese of Bethlehem is remaining true to the total mission of the Church. You wisely chose to assist the Diocese of Kajo-Keji as well as some parts of Pennsylvania where there are the poor. I **appreciate** the commitment of your Bishop and the entire Diocese in this worthwhile campaign. Indeed this will bring hope to a situation of hopelessness to a people who have known nothing but war and poverty. Related to this is ignorance and disease. I would like to assure you that this campaign will impact many lives and will bring change to many people.

Although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has been signed between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party, many people have not yet seen tangible fruits of this peace. Some of the protocols of the Agreement have not also been implemented. We appreciate that now we have peace, there is no fear from aerial bombardment; we also have freedom to travel anywhere in Southern Sudan, although we in Kajo-Keji still have to travel south through Uganda to go north to any part of Sudan.

The prophecy of **Isaiah 2:4** where swords were converted into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks is not yet fulfilled in terms of the Southern Sudan context. In contrast to this, when a peace treaty was signed in Mozambique in 1992, they found out that the Mozambique was awash with guns and many landmines. The Christian Council of Mozambique then came up with a plan to exchange guns for sewing machines, ploughing instruments, bicycles and seed grain. The church there converted tools of war into useful tools, as we read in this passage.

For us in Southern Sudan, not all areas of Southern Sudan are enjoying the fruits of the agreement. This is due to the non-implementation of the all the terms of the CPA; the SPLM leader recently said that Southern Sudan could easily go back to war. Pray with us that the CPA is implemented.

Update on the CPA

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the SPLM and the National Congress Party, has given hope to the people of Southern Sudan. Although many people have not yet seen tangible fruits of this peace, there is now freedom of movement, a functional government in Southern Sudan, some roads are being repaired, schools being rebuilt. In Kajo-Keji, we have seen some people constructing shops, houses, schools being built by some NGOs. The roads in Kajo-Keji are still among the challenges.

Having said that there are still many challenges to the CPA. This week we heard news from Juba that the SPLM has withdrawn from the Government of National Unity (GoNU). This means that the SPLM ministers and advisors will not participate in the government. Apart from the non implementation of the CPA, one of the issues cited is the right of the SPLM to reshuffle its members in government. Some of the aspects of the CPA that still need to be implemented include:

1. Lack of Transparency on the Exploitation and Sharing of Oil revenue.

The NCP has not been transparent on the actual income of the oil revenues. The CPA stipulates that 50% of the oil revenue from oil fields found in Southern Sudan should go to the Government of Southern Sudan. The income expected is less than what was anticipated. There is belief that this is not the correct revenue.

2. The North South Border:

The NCP has intentionally avoided implementing the CPA provisions on issues pertaining to the South – North border demarcation. This has implication on the right level of income from the oil revenue. Because the correct border has not been determined, it means that the GOSS is not getting a correct level of its oil revenue.

3. The Withdrawal of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) from Southern Sudan.

According to the CPA, the Sudan Armed Forces should have redeployed its forces from the south by July 9th, 2007. While the majority of the SPLA have withdrawn from the North, this has not been reciprocated by SAF.

4. The Abyei Protocol

The NCP has refused to implement the Protocol on Abyei. It has also refused to implement the Abyei Boundary Commission (ABC) Report which was carefully and thoroughly researched and written by international and national experts.

5. Delay in formation & operationalisation of various Commissions of the CPA.

The NCP has been slow in the formation and operationalisation of a number of commissions and other institutions as stipulated by the CPA. These include the Census Commissions, the Civil service reform.

What is the way forward?

It is important for the international community to bring pressure to bear on the NCP. I call on you to urge your government to bring pressure on the National Congress Party to implement the whole of the CPA and not do it selectively.

The full implementation of CPA could be a blue print for settling the conflict in Darfur. The media and international attention on the conflict in Darfur has been at the expense of the implementation of the CPA.

The involvement of the church in reconciliation

In the reading from the book of **Ephesians 2:13** we are reminded that Christ death on the Cross reconciled us to God. He made peace between God and us. He also reconciled believing Jews and believing Gentiles. It is because of his death that I am here and can indeed see you here, as my brothers and sisters in Christ and that is why you thought of **New Hope campaign**. In v.18 we read that it is because of this that we have access to the Father and making us members of this family. One of our Sudanese bishops says that we are all people of God but those who accept the Cross become children of God. That is why, in verse 19, we read that we are no longer foreigners and aliens but members of this household. Regardless of where you are, as long as you are a believer, you are a member of this household and this family of Christ.

Conclusion

I would like to encourage each one of you in this ministry of reconciliation. I would like to encourage you to undertake a wholistic ministry in your mission, meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the people. It is important that there is a balance made between the physical and spiritual needs of the people. You cannot do one without the other and claim to be doing the mission of the Church.