

Tuesday, 16 March, 2010, 14:54

Greetings from Jos.

I hope this reaches you as a "blind copy"!

I hope also that you don't feel bombarded by letters from here, but I thought you might like to keep up with the weekly Lent meditations and news. The world keeps turning and the days keep going round, and it's the same world, and yet ... something has changed. The curfew has become part of life (well, we are used to some curfew anyway, though not to one that starts at 6p.m.) - all "evening" programmes are adjusted so that they are over by about 4p.m.. Driving is OK, though some long detours are necessary, which then increases the traffic flow on other roads.

The heart of the matter is that as Christians we really have to look to God to do miracles and to act for us. The Old Testament stories are not just "stories": they were real. God DID bring victory out of apparently hopeless situations - but his people must trust in him and pursue righteousness, justice and truth. "Revenge" and judgement must be left to God. Please continue to pray that God will remove the sword of the wicked, and also that he will pour out the spirit of forgiveness upon, in and through his church.

By the way, about one week after the crisis of November 2008 there was a big out of season rain which washed the streets of Jos clean of blood. Yesterday, about one week after the massacre, there was a big very early rain which will have washed Dogo na Hauwa village. Thank God.

With love and good wishes to you all,
Susan

15 March 2010

Dear Friends,

LENT 5

The last few days have been very difficult for the people of Plateau State. The actual massacre that took place in Dogo na Hauwa and its surrounding villages began with little rumours until they became a reality. Very sadly, this has given credence to rumours in an unacceptable manner. So it is that people can just start running simply because someone was chasing his goat with a stick and the whole community is thrown into turmoil because of the interpretation that different people may give to a man running with a stick in his hand. Worse still, there is an abundance of text messages making the rounds as to which community will next be attacked. So people sleep - and I must say people hardly really do sleep - and wake up knowing that there are very brief hours in which to conduct business because of the curfew, and so everything is done in a rush, sometimes in fear and at other times acting out of panic. It is such an awful thing to live in a state of terror, with the fear of the unknown, the fear of what might happen next.

Jesus said: *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself (John 12:32)*. The corollary to this passage is in Numbers 21:8: *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."* The point is that whatever kind of human devastation, whether caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons etc. or by men, like that of Dogo na Hauwa, war, terrorism etc, there is a solution in Jesus. Jesus asks us to look up to him.

On Thursday 11th March the women came out in a peaceful demonstration mourning, weeping, wailing and crying out to the Lord. Something happened. Up in the skies, at noon, suddenly a ring of rainbow colours surrounded the sun. The news

cameras caught it and suddenly the attention of the women was drawn to this extraordinary appearance, and they looked up.

When Archbishop Desmond Tutu developed from Scripture the idea of a Rainbow people, it materialized into the freedom of Mandella and the formation of the Truth Commission which brought healing to Southern Africa. The rainbow that appeared on Thursday is not an idea: it simply appeared. It appeared as it did to Noah as a sign of the covenant, to say:

I set my rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; ¹⁵ and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ And God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.” (Genesis 9:13-17)

For us in Plateau State this sign is from God, and like Noah, it carries the same invitation that Jesus offers, “Look up . . .” It is in looking up that we find salvation, deliverance, healing, blessings and the full content of God’s covenant with humanity. It is in looking up that we totally surrender and leave vengeance, judgement and justice to God. If we look down, we shall only find revenge, bitterness, anger, pain and an unending cycle of destruction, and in the end Satan alone is honoured and we ourselves are found to be agents of the devil. Jesus’ invitation to look up where he is lifted is exactly what Paul means when he says in Ephesians 1:20-21:

God put this power to work in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

In Christ we have victory over the devil and all his works, which is why we have been saved and made partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel, so that we who hope in Christ might live our lives as forgiven sinners, endowed with the power to forgive through the work of the Holy Spirit, so that Christ might be praised and his glory set forth in the world. It is time to look up, not down. It is time to forgive, not to revenge. It is time to remember the sign he has given of his Son, Jesus Christ, and the sign he has further confirmed on us in Jos and Plateau State, by the rainbow ring around the sun. This is a covenant moment with God and we will do well not to miss our opportunity by failing to look up, and to wait on God. Do not forget that this coming week (Lent 5) is Passion Week, when Jesus spoke these words. So let us now walk with Jesus in our own passion, knowing that his was more than ours, but that he is with us and will help us in our passion even though we were unable to help him with his passion.

The Lord be with you,

+The Most Rev. Dr. B. A. Kwashi
Archbishop of Jos

FROM: THE MOST REV. DR. BENJAMIN A. KWASHI

21 January 2010

Dear Friends,

Peace and greetings.

Everyone is asking: Why? Why are Muslims and Christians unable to live together in peace on the Jos Plateau? Why is there a continuing recurrence of violence? These are questions people in Nigeria and journalists from all over the world have asked me. I wish I had the answers.

The one thing I do know is that this time, as at other times, Christians once again have become the scapegoat of some evil intention to cause disharmony, separation, pain, destruction of lives and property and disruption of normal civil life. This to me is evidence of what Jesus meant when he said, *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10)

Evidence of this abundant life can be clearly seen in the progress, health care and social services, together with the adult education, children's education and also tertiary education which the church brings to a people. These developments are functions of the gospel; they are products and evidence of an effective gospel ministry in any community. This same gospel also prepares people for leadership roles in all spheres of life. It is these fruits of the activity and life of the gospel which are now suddenly burnt up in flames in one day, as the investments of a life-time are turned into ashes.

It should be noted that in Jos we are coming face to face in confrontation with Satan and the powers in hell, and only God can save us. There are, however, many Muslims who totally disagree with violence as a means of settling issues, and of course it is not in accordance with the gospel to use violence to settle issues either. What seems to be a recurring decimal is that over time, those who have in the past used violence to settle political issues, economic issues, social matters, intertribal disagreements, or any issue for that matter, now continue to use that same path of violence and cover it up with religion. We must pray against the powers of hell. We must also pray for our State Government, our Houses of Assembly at State and Federal levels and our law enforcement agents, that they may choose the path of truth and justice, and deal with crime by its proper name, so that no-one, no matter how high or low, no matter of what faith or creed, should be exempt from facing the law.

The national leadership should be lifted up to God, that they may rise beyond a concern for political success and seek to do good and right in all things for the benefit of all people. This is a most urgent prayer request, because Nigeria as a nation has a large and ever-increasing army of leader-less, law-less, unemployable, unemployed, demoralised and near hope-less youth. This, to my prophetic mind, is the big security issue which the governments at Local, State and Federal levels are not taking seriously. For example, every crisis in Nigeria in the last ten years has been executed by this generation of young people. With each passing year, they perfect their skills and when they run out of a supply of money, or when they become bored with any situation, then any opportunity for action gives them satisfaction. This army has no religion, but can choose to go under the name of religion to achieve its motives. They are uneducated

and so their values are totally different, as are their ways of handling weapons or choosing how issues be settled. Please pray for us.

We deeply regret that a matter of work on a building site should trigger off the present huge set-back for the people of Jos and Plateau State. Yet we rejoice that the gospel has not lost its power to save. God is still on the throne and evil will never, ever, have victory over good. We have a gospel to proclaim, and it is this gospel which holds the solution and the remedy for the mayhem, the bitterness, anger, frustration and the sheer evil which leads to the ruin of individual lives, and to the ruin which we see all around us in Jos now.

Points for consideration:

- a. Once again the international media have highlighted corpses and have shown and talked of corpses in the mosque. Corpses do not talk and we do not know the names and addresses of these corpses.
- b. The same international media have shown only the corpses in the mosques and are not interested in the corpses which are not inside the mosque. Corpses should be in the mortuary or should be buried.
- c. It is worthy of investigation as to why the construction of a building should be carried out on a Sunday, during the time of Christian worship, with such a large number of youth, and why a disagreement on or near the site should result in these same youth producing guns, machetes and fake military uniforms.

Brethren: be fully assured that our faith in Christ is intact, and shall remain so in life and in death. We have a gospel to proclaim; a gospel that brings light in darkness, hope in despair, courage in danger, joy in sorrow. It is a gospel that brings life in all its fullness, and it is this gospel alone which can bring a lasting solution to the problems of the world and of Jos.

The Lord be with you,

+Most Rev. Dr. Benjamin A Kwashi
Archbishop of Jos

P.S. Please check our diocesan website: www.anglicandioceseofjos.org