

2021 FATHERS' SUNDAY MESSAGE TO ALL CHURCHES by Rt. Rev. Aloysius Agbo(JP). (Bishop of Nsukka Diocese)

Dear people of God, it is the Lord's doing that we are alive to celebrate another Fathers' Sunday despite the unpleasant experiences and challenges of last year, which obviously snowballed into the current year. Even in the midst of the current economic uncertainties and volatile security situation, the Lord has remained our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. We have seen his grace, goodness and mercy manifest in different areas of our lives and we cannot but say may all praise and adoration be ascribed to his name.

Fathers' Sunday affords us the opportunity to appreciate our fathers and at the same time call their attention to their God-given role both in the family and in the church of God. We have enough evidence to show that our fathers are waxing strong at the Diocesan level: the Benedictus Petroleum Station which has almost been completed, the sustained support to the missionary church at Iga and the leadership role being played in our churches, Parishes, Archdeaconries and the Diocese are eloquent testimonies. We urge you not to relent. It is pertinent and our desire that fathers should take the lead in this new shift in discipleship. As heads of the homes, we urge you to embrace it passionately and show the good example to your wives and children. We, therefore, congratulate all the fathers on this their joyful day and pray that they shall march forward ever and backward never as the soldiers of Christ in these last days.

The Theme for the year: Dare to Be a Daniel. Dan. 1:8

In line with our new approach to discipleship and the need to instill the vision into every member of the Diocese, we have been led to reflect on the theme: **“Dare to be a Daniel.”** Dan. 1:8, which reads:

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself”

The essence of this theme is to challenge us to stand up and stand out for Jesus in spite of all the obstacles to our faith in this generation, just like Daniel did in Babylon even though the forces opposing him were too powerful. To dare means to have courage enough to do something. Three things could be learnt from this daring attitude of Daniel

First of all, he was intentional. He purposed in his heart. He was not looking at others. He was determined to do his master’s will. Because he knew the God he believed in, he was courageous enough to say no to food offered to idols even when the king was involved. He dared to stand for God against the entire kingdom of Babylon. Like Daniel, we are enjoined to determine in our heart to remain firm for God and in our faith no matter how life-threatening or dangerous the situation may be. Today, many people are in the church yet they are sponsoring all kinds of idolatry. They run to horrible places seeking protection. Most of our youths have resorted to covenanting with shrines and occultism in order to get quick money, power and prominence. It is in the light of these ugly trends that the message of Daniel is sounding now. Unless we make our Christian life a heart decision, we cannot withstand the forces of evil and darkness.

Secondly, he was passionate for holiness. To be holy is to be separated unto God and that was how Daniel was. When other people saw the king’s food as enjoyment, he saw it as defilement. In this age of so called hyper grace, where sin

has been given many pleasant names to make it attractive, we should follow Daniel's example. In this age of social media and fashion madness, we should be careful of what we watch, what we wear, and who we relate with to avoid the defilement of the world.

Lastly, Daniel was a man of prayer. When he rejected the earthly food of the king he was not going hungry. It is true that vegetables are nutritious but they were not the source of his nourishment. It was his daily encounter with God in the place of prayer. As a man of prayer he interceded for his people and refused to bow or plead to any other God except his God. By so doing, he convinced the pagan kings and their helpless magicians to believe in the power of the living God. We are challenged to be so resolved as Christians in this perverse and crooked generation.

Conclusion

As we celebrate the Fathers' today, let us be challenged by Daniel's **resolute intentions**, his **passion for holiness** and his **habitual prayer life**. By these, we can change our society and win souls for the kingdom of God just as he established the sovereignty of his God in the entire kingdom of Babylon and beyond. Let us make this resolution boldly as we sing

Hymn A&M 307, Abu 224 (1 and last).

1. Stand up, stand up, for Jesus

Ye soldiers of the cross;

Lift high His royal banner,

It must not suffer loss;

From victory unto victory

His army shall he lead

Till every foe is vanquished

And Christ is Lord indeed

▪ Stand up, stand up, for Jesus:

The strife will not be long;

This day the noise of battle

The next the victors' song

To him that over cometh

A crown of life shall be;

He with the king of glory

Shall reign eternally.

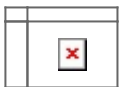
CMF Christ our Foundation!

CMF Christ our Example!

CMF Destined to Lead!

Happy Celebration!

Your brother, Friend & Bishop,



Rt. Rev. A. E. Agbo (JP)

Bishop of Nsukka