

DAY OF PRAYER, FASTING, REPENTANCE AND ADORATION

SPARE, O LORD, YOUR PEOPLE

As the Church of God in **Aba** continues to address *Mysterium Iniquitatis*, with which our times are marked in a particular way, we must be confident that there is a way forward for us. The pull of evil - this *mysterium iniquitatis* - in us drags us into a shackle of fear of the future, of emptiness, of suffering, of apprehension, uncertainty and disbelief.

*Video meliora proboque
Deteriora sequor**

For I do not do the good I want,
but I do the evil I do not want (Rom. 7: 19)

We are a walking civil war. This cannot be what life is about! Indeed not.

History's tragedies have often resulted from people failing to honor the values on which they were built. Empires have waxed and waned because they lost their vision of a unified world. Nations have risen and fallen because the founders' dreams were corrupted by self-interest. Some people say that the Nigerian experiment is coming to an end. We are no longer a nation obeying the call

To serve our Fatherland
With love and strength and faith
The labour of our heroes past shall never be in vain
To serve with heart and might
One nation bound in freedom peace and unity.

Conflictive bio-diversity, partisan politics, ideological wranglings, pandemic walking corruption, religious strife, and class conflict have made a mockery of our claims of unity and progress. Indeed, the times we are living in place us before great and complex problems and the social question has become, at the same time, an anthropological question. The spread of a confused cultural relativism and of utilitarian and hedonist individualism weakens democracy and fosters the dominance of evil.

Today the invocation of God's mercy needs to rise up from our humble and troubled hearts. In this evil and adulterous generation (cf Mt. 12:39) vice has reached a peak. Crime is on the ascendancy. Decency is fatal. All is vendible. This epitomises the present culture of kidnapping, a searing violation of Human Rights, a neo-technological industry and divinely condemned in the Bible (cf Exodus 21: 16; Deuteronomy 24:27). **Abia**, *God's Own State*, is stigmatized a kidnapping **State**, a den, a laboratory of kidnapping. Foreign and local investors shake off the dust from their feet against **Abia**, (Lk. 10: 11).

Aba, a core commercial colossus now stands on feet of clay. She is all chaos. Roughness is at war with smoothness and rubbish with cleanliness, she is almost reconfigured as a result of mass desertion and changing business demographics. What do we now have? Worse deeds worse suffering must ensure (John **Milton**, *Paradise Lost*).

The historian Charles A. Beard once was asked what he had learnt from his study of history. He responded:

*When it is dark enough,
You can see the stars.*

As was true of biblical figures - from Adam to the Apostles - sometimes in the darkest times of our lives is when we can see God most clearly and experience grace most completely. This is our confidence. The way forward for us is prayer of a humble and contrite heart. Let us admit our guilt; let us admit our God-defiance. Return to God (Jer. 3:14). *Amend your ways and your deeds and I will stay with you* (Jer. 7:3). Nothing substitutes for obedience to God's word. O God, there is no safety, save in loving and obeying you. Keep us near you, we pray. Amen.

We join Queen Esther in her moment of doom to pray:

My Lord, our King, you alone are God. Help me, who am alone and have no help but you. Be mindful of us, O Lord. Manifest yourself in the time of our distress and give me courage, King of gods and Ruler of every power. Save us by your power, and help me, who am alone and have no one but you, O Lord. Hear my prayer; have pity on your inheritance and turn our sorrow into joy: thus we shall live to sing praise to your name, O Lord. Do not silence those who praise you.

- Book of Esther, Chapter C: 14,23,25,10.

Let us pray for all our leaders whom I doubt not that they reflect how potent in politics is opportunity, how shifting the phases, how incalculable the issues, of events, how easily swayed are men's predilections, what pitfalls there are and what insincerity of life (Cicero, *Epistulae Ad Familiares*, II. vii). The call to politics is noble. The Church esteems it. When carried out faithfully, public service enables them to grow in wisdom, integrity and personal fulfillment. We therefore pray:

Assist with your spirit of counsel and fortitude
the President of the Federal Republic,
that his administration may be conducted in righteousness,
and be eminently useful to our people.

We pray for Chief Dr. T.A. Orji, the Governor of Abia State,

for the members of the legislature,
and all others
who are entrusted to guard our political welfare.
May they be enabled by your powerful protection to discharge their duties with honesty
and ability.

We salute the Police, the Army and other Security Agents for the sacrifice, the courage and the responsibility they display in ensuring our safety in these exacting times.

Looking on you, Young People, I see the flower of Nigeria, the flower of the Church. I see a young Nigeria, a young Church with imagination and courage. To you, Young People, His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI urges to be imbued with the ethics of responsibility. Return to God. It is not ideologies that save the world but only a return to the living God, our Creator, the guarantor of our freedom, the guarantor of what is really good and true. True revolution consists in simply turning to God who is the measure of what is right and who at the same time, is everlasting love. And what could ever save us apart from that love? asks Pope Benedict XVI. (cf Benedict XVI to the Youth; Cologne, Germany, August 21, 2005). Action unmoored from the truth is ultimately wasteful and always soul destroying. Truth alone triumphs. The victory of truth is charity. Love without truth devolves into sentimentality, and truth without love becomes cold and calculating (Pope Benedict XVI). If you wish to remain young, seek Christ (St. Augustine). Critical times like ours today need you, as the barque needs a helmsman or storm-tossed mariner a haven. This is our prayer, without prejudice to the prayer of the second stanza of Our National Anthem:

O God of creation
Direct our noble cause
Guide our leaders right
Help our youth the truth to know
In love and honesty to grow
And living just and true
Great lofty height attain
To build a nation where peace and
Justice shall reign.

Let us humbly implore Our Lady, Our Mother and Queen, Salus Populi Abani - protector of the people of **Aba** - to see how weak we are; lost in tears; save us, lighten our anguish; soothe our sorrows; so that deep peace may brood up us in **Aba**. Amen.