New Apostolic Church International

Thanksgiving Day message 2020

Stammapostel Jean-Luc Schneider (Foto: O. Rütten)

Zurich. Actually, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider wanted to conduct the Thanksgiving Day service on 4 October 2020 in Paris. However, the restrictions in place on account of Covid-19 forced him to change his plans. Instead, he visited the congregation in Strasbourg (France).

In the Thanksgiving Day service he preached about the possibilities that people have to thank God for His creation:

“Our thankfulness to God, the Creator, is expressed in different ways.

Praise. We praise and thank God in prayer and song. Many of us have more time because of the pandemic. Activities within the congregation are reduced. Those who work from home spend less time commuting. It would be wise to spend a little of the time freed up in conversation with God.

Offering. We bring our offering to God. We know that it is first to His grace that we have what we have, and we thank Him for that. We express our love for Him by dedicating a portion of our resources to Him. Our offering is a testament to our freedom—we are not slaves of money.

Respect for the creation. We respect the Creator’s work. God created mankind in His image. All human beings are identical in nature. We owe them all, men, women or children, the same respect, regardless of their origin and social status. Jesus tells us how to behave towards our neighbour: by doing to them what we want others to do to us. And to underline the importance He placed on this rule, He added that God will treat us as we treat others. We thank the Creator of the earth by treating it with love and wisdom. Aware of our responsibility to the present generation and those to come, we are careful not to selfishly exploit natural resources.

Work. After giving them the land, God commanded mankind to cultivate it. Mankind cultivates the earth to thank the Creator. Presenting work as a punishment forced on mankind following the fall into sin is based on a misinterpretation of Genesis 3: 17–19. This passage aims to show that the sin of mankind has repercussions on all their living space. The order to work is found in the Ten Commandments. To thank the Lord for electing, delivering, and blessing them, the Israelites are called to follow the commandments, which includes the requirement to work. We, too, thank God by obeying His law. It is not a question of employment or unemployment, but about our heart’s disposition. Thankful to the Creator, we are committed to contributing to the common good through our work.

Sanctify the Sunday. The Almighty Creator did not need to rest to regain strength. His “rest” emphasizes the perfection of His work: God stopped working because there was nothing to add or correct. The Bible text encourages mankind to stop their

activity once a week to contemplate and praise the Creator's work. The Third Commandment takes up this theme. The Israelites had to keep the Sabbath to honour the Creator, give thanks to their deliverer (Deut 5: 12–15), and celebrate the covenant between God and His people. Keeping the Sabbath thus became for Israel a way of affirming its identity in relation to other peoples. Later, Christians decided to sanctify the Sunday in memory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, their Saviour. It is on this day that they come together to give thanks to God.

As a result of the pandemic, many New Apostolic Christians can no longer attend the divine service. We share their pain and pray that God will use His almighty power to end this situation. And we trust Him: He will!

The risk is that this period of famine will strengthen some believers in their belief that you do not have to go to church to be a "good Christian". Such a claim has no biblical foundation. Let us continue to sanctify the Sunday by attending the divine service as soon as possible. The divine service is an opportunity for us to:

- count God's blessings, to thank Him and to prove our love for Him by dedicating time to Him;
- be with Jesus to celebrate our covenant with Him and strengthen our fellowship with Him;
- take care of the new creature He has placed in us;
- proclaim our faith in Jesus Christ and our commitment to His values. How can we be credible when we say that God died to save us and He wants to lead us into His glory if we do not even feel the need to come and worship Him? To proclaim our belonging to Christ, there is no need to wear outward signs or adhere to dietary guidelines—let us go to church! People are often very quick to demonstrate in the streets to make their opinions known. Our commitment to the values of the gospel (love, tolerance, forgiveness, rejection of violence and injustice) we express by attending the divine service. Make no mistake: the number of Christians who attend church inevitably affects the importance that society places on Christian values;
- contribute to the unity of His Church—we accept one another as Christ accepts us.

Truly, we have many reasons to thank God, and there are many ways we can do it!"

Thanksgiving Day commemorates the creatorship of God. On one Sunday of the year–Thanksgiving Sunday–a divine service is held in which gratitude is expressed for God's faithfulness to His creation. On this occasion, believers are called to bring a special offering of thanks.

8 October 2020