



Homily for Closing Mass of Golden Jubilee of SECAM, 28 July 2019, KAMPALA

Jul 30, 2019

KAMPALA, UGANDA -

As we conclude today the celebration of SECAM golden Jubilee, allow me, to share some insights suggested by today's readings. One striking thing about today's first reading is that between Abraham and God roles seem to have been. Usually it is human beings who themselves are weak and sinners who are quick to judge and rush to condemn another weak and sinful people, and God who has not sin is the one who shows mercy and gives a second chance. We remember this from the scene of a woman caught in adultery where men who like her are sinful are after her blood, and Jesus who has no sin showing mercy.

That it is how it usually is, but in today's readings it God who is raging with anger against the people of Gomorrah for their sinful ways and is out to destroy them, and Abraham the human keeps pleading and bargaining with God, and at the end the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are spared, God does not destroy them, thanks to bargaining plea of Abraham. I do not know what to make out of this change of roles, God appearing to be full revenge while a mere human being in the form of Abraham appears to be the one mercifully resolving the situation.

What I would like to note is that the reason for the success of Abraham in pleading with God is that although Sodom and Gomorrah had sinful people, there were still a few good people, and on account of those few good people the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were saved. What does this mean for us as we celebrate 50 years of SECAM ? At personal level I think it means we must never tire of being good and doing good, even though we may feel that we are going against the stream. We must continue to do what is good in our moral life, even though we maybe labelled as old fashioned.

This is very true for young people who are constantly pressurised to be like every body. To the young people as we celebrate this Jubilee, in the light today's first reading, keep doing what is good even if you are a minority because you will not only save yourself but you will also save others as well. This is also true for lay people in families, at work, in business and politics, where many people are taking the easy road of immediate gratification and self serving, Keep doing what is right, even if the majority are doing the opposite, because when you keep doing what is right, there is hope for the salvation of others as well. Be the light of the world and salt of the earth.

This situation of Sodom and Gomorrah as we celebrate 50 years of SECAM seem to be suggesting that we should neither be overly pessimistic or overly optimistic. Gomorrah and Sodom was bad, and for this reason God wanted to destroy it. But Abraham reminded God, that bad as Gomorrah and Sodom was, there was still something good in it. There is what is called Afro Pessimism where everything bad is associated with Africa. As a reaction to this Afro Pessimism there is what is called Afro Optimism, which tends to romanticize Africa as Paradise,

Today's first readings applied to our context seems to suggest that we must neither be overly pessimistic or overly optimistic about Africa, but be Afro realistic. To see what is not going well, and to name for what it is, but also to see what is good, and to be encouraged by it. Building on the strenght of what is good, we can be encouraged to deal and overcome what is evil. At the opening Mass of this Jubilee the preacher eloquently noted good developments since 50 years which should propel us to move forward,, but in the same breath, he noted what is not going well, this is being Afro realistic.

In Today's second reading COLOSSIANS 2: 12-14 St.Paul reminds the Colossians that they were baptized into Christ. They were once uncircumcised, but now they live a new life in Christ. The jubilee is about making new beginning, starting afresh, beginning a new life. Let us abandon behaviors attitudes that do not make us prosper as a continent and embrace those that will see us moving forward. Again beginning with our personal lives, because until this new beginning starts with the self, this conversion from the past, it will materialize at Church level, societal level and continental level when it begins with each and everyone of us at personal level.

We heard how the centenary celebration of the arrival of missionaries in Uganda led to the establishment of monumental changes and development like centenary bank, the centenary choir, the building of the mini basilica and many other development monuments. As we complete 50 year's of SECAM, there must be new beginnings in our lives that demonstrate that we are truly pilgrims making a journey towards God, growing in holiness.

On account of the journey of 50 years, a felt change in our life, a life in which we grow more and more to be like Christ must be evident. We cannot be same as if the Jubilee never happened. We must be raised up with him. Only when we have grown into being more like Christ can we hope to be instrumental in bringing about God's kingdom as Christ did. Once again the kingdom of God begins at personal level, where I constantly align my will with the will of the Father as Jesus did, and then extend to society.

It is not by our own power as human beings that we have reached 50 years of SECAM, but by the power and grace of God. As it will heard when the message is read today and when the Kampala document eventually comes out, we have set ourselves as Church in Africa big goals as we begin another 50 years. We do so with the hope in a God who listens to our prayer, in a God who is able to do for us for us infinitely more than we can imagine or think of.

And so in spite of all the challenges that we see in front of us, we enter the next 50 years of SECAM bold because we are encouraged by the words of when Jesus when says to us today "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. The Church in Africa will become what we hope it will be because "If we though we are evil, know how to give good gifts to your others,, how much more will our Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Of course that God will give us what we ask of him does not mean that we must not play our role. To come back to the first reading, it was through the intercession of Abraham that God did not destroy Gomorrah and Sodom, had he not done so, Gomorrah and Sodom would have been destroyed. As we put the next 50 years of SECAM into God's hand, let us also play our part because grace builds on human nature and God wants to collaborate with us in bringing about His kingdom. Like Abraham, let us allow ourselves to be God's instruments in bringing about the kingdom of justice and peace, in Africa and in the world. God bless Africa, God bless SECAM

Bishop S. SIPUKA