



Features: SHARING THE SAVING NEWS

May 09, 2020

ABUJA, NIGERIA -

The word Kerygma is a Greek word derived from the verb Kerusso that means to cry or proclaim, or to preach the Good News. After the resurrection of Jesus, his disciples proclaimed the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This was why Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed the meaning of the death, crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (See Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 22-23). This was the first kerygmatic speech in the Acts of the Apostles. Peter continued this kerygma/proclamation in his Epistle where he emphasised the significance of the death of Christ. He reminded his readers they were ransomed by the precious blood of Christ, who was the spotless unblemished lamb (1 Peter 1:17-21).

Kerygma is different from broadcasting news or disseminating information because it connects the events of history to the economy of salvation. Kerygma is an exposition of scripture and a proclamation of Good News in the face of despair. No wonder, the Archbishop of Owerri, Most Rev. Anthony J.V. Obinna speaks often about the 'Saving News' in contrast to 'Breaking News.' We hear more of breaking news than saving news today. Everyday we are inundated by so many news headlines, and most often we are unable to make meaning out of the series of events that happen daily in the world.

The resurrection of Jesus was the greatest saving news ever told in the history of the world. After the resurrection of Jesus, two disciples were on the road to Emmaus, a village seven miles from Jerusalem. Jesus came to join them on the journey, but they were so much in a state of shock and confusion about the things going on. Jesus asked, "What is this you are talking about?" and they stood still, with sadness written over their faces. They responded: "Why, it seems you are the only traveler in Jerusalem who doesn't know what has happened there these past few days." Jesus further asked: "What is it?" It was at this point that Cleopas, one of the travellers started breaking news to this 'ignorant stranger' about how Jesus of Nazareth was sentenced to death and crucified. Cleopas added another breaking news, which is about the claim of some women who met the tomb of Jesus empty and an angel who came to tell the women that Jesus had come back to life.

Cleopas was breaking news about all the events that took place, but could not comprehend the meaning of these strings of events. Jesus began to put the stories into perspective. He began to change the 'breaking news' into a 'saving news' when he explained that the crucifixion, death and resurrection was part of Divine plan for the salvation of the human race. Hearing the saving news, their disappointment and despair turned into joy. Thereafter, Jesus brought them to the next stage of the encounter with him when he took bread, blessed it, broke it and shared with them. It was after breaking and sharing the bread that these travelers experienced a deep spiritual encounter that enabled that to recognize Jesus.

The breaking of the word was an enriching encounter as it made their hearts filled with deep spiritual yearning. The breaking of bread opened their eyes of faith. Both experiences were so delightful that they transformed their despair

into hope and happiness. They had known Jesus from a distance and now they had a close union with him. Earlier on, they heard about him, and now they encountered him more closely. It was a transforming experience that opened their eyes. They began to see the world differently.

People encounter Christ and experience some kind of transformation. Anthony De Mello gives a story of a new convert to Christ and his friend who does not believe. The conversation between these two friends went thus:

'So you have been converted to Christ?'

'Yes.'

'Then you must know a great deal about him.' Tell me what country was he born in?'

'I don't know'

What was his age when he died?'

'I don't know.'

How many sermons did he preach?'

'I don't know.'

You certainly know very little for a man who claims to be converted to Christ!’

You are right. I am ashamed at how little I know about him. But this much I do know:

Three years ago I was a drunkard. I was in debt. My family was falling to pieces. My wife and children would dread my return home each evening. But now I have given up drink; we are out of debt; ours is now a happy home; my children eagerly wait for my return home each evening. All this Christ has done for me. This much I know of Christ!’

This new convert did not just know, read or heard about Christ, but he experienced him personally and was transformed by his encounter with Christ. Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, this new convert knew less about Christ until he encountered him very closely. Similarly, we are all pilgrims on a spiritual journey and we keep longing to meet Jesus in order to have this deep and transforming encounter. No one encounters Jesus deeply and ever remains the same. Encountering Jesus has a saving effect. After encountering him, we should share the saving news of our salvation.

By Rev. Fr. Gerald Musa

