



## **WE MUST KEEP HOPE ALIVE DESPITE MYRIADS OF PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA**

Aug 08, 2021

**EKITI - NIGERIA -**

### **Bishop Ajakaye**

Despite several problems being encountered by Nigeria as a nation, the Catholic Bishop of Ekiti Diocese, Most Rev. Felix Femi Ajakaye has encouraged all to keep hope alive in Jesus Christ, who the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Bishop Ajakeye stated this in his homily of the 19th Sunday in the Ordinary Time, with the theme, 'Christ Our Viaticum, Food For Our Journey' stressing that, "We are to keep learning Christ and continue to maintaining living our knowledge of him within and outside our environments – Family, Church, Workplace, School, Playing Field, Politics. From all our terrors the Lord is prepared to set us free. Thus, we need to always seek refuge in him and have total, complete, confidence in him."

The Bishop said rather than murmuring like the Jews did at Jesus, “let us resolve to commend our worries, troubles, sorrows, and even our happiness, into Christ’s hands in the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist (the Mass) daily where Christ feeds us with himself for spiritual strength in our journeys. In Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God is ALWAYS with us.”

He said we should learn to give thanks to God in Christ (even if it is brief) in the Tabernacle after the Mass, instead of rushing out of the Church immediately after the Mass. “This is showing our gratitude to Christ after the Spiritual Meal. Let us also cultivate the habit of perpetual adoration of Jesus Christ in the Tabernacle.”

Find below the full text of the homily:

19th Sunday In Ordinary Time Year B, 8 August, 2021.

Theme: Christ Our Viaticum, Food For Our Journey

Pope Francis’ Intention for the Month of August 2021

Universal – The Church

Let us pray for the Church, that she may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel.

## Ekiti Diocesan Intention for the Month of August 2021

We pray for the Poor, the Sick, the Weak and the Oppressed.

Viaticum is 'communion given to somebody who is dying or in danger of dying'. Furthermore, you can also learn more on Viaticum in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), Paragraphs 1517, 1524 and 1525. This is one of the ways of increasing our knowledge and knowing more of our Faith and the Church we belong. As I said last Sunday, growing toward maturity in Christ is a lifelong process. It is ongoing. It is not static.

Having known what viaticum is, my Brothers, Sisters and Friends, looking back to our past today, we may recollect certain people we have met, and even continue to meet. Some of them may hold a prominent place in our memory. They are people who have meant a lot to us positively: our Parents, our Guardians, Siblings, Relatives, Priests (in our Parishes or elsewhere), Consecrated Persons, close Friends, Schoolmates, Classmates, or Someone we can never forget having helped us make difficult decisions, those perhaps that assisted us to determine the course in life we have chosen.

There could have been friends who stood by us in our dark moments of life when we could have thought that all was lost, or teachers who with patience, care and

understanding convinced us to finish our education. Really, we are grateful to these people, and we realize that we would be different persons if we would not have met them.

My Brothers, Sisters and Friends, suppose you would not have met Christ, what would be your outlook to life? Each of us is to visualize this, no matter how difficult it may be, though even without knowing it, many people live by Christian values. But without Christ in our lives, we would be entirely different. Remember: Life without Christ is life without meaning. It is life without hope.

Like last Sunday's message, 'The Lord gave them bread from heaven', again, using the symbolism of bread, today's Readings bring out what Christ means to us. 'Taste and see that the Lord is good' (Responsorial Psalm).

The First Reading – 1 Kings 19:4-8, gives a vivid picture of Prophet Elijah's predicament. He was depressed. Queen Jezebel had forced him to get out of the kingdom. In fear, Elijah had to flee for his life. On his journey through the desert to the mount of God, Horeb, he was hungry and tired, but he was strengthened by a cake and a jar of water provided by the Lord.

Then, strengthened by the food, Prophet Elijah walked 'forty days and forty nights to

Horeb, the mount of God'. God's word in and through this tradition could be: On our lifetime journey to the mountain where we hope to meet God, we need the food to keep going like Prophet Elijah, the food which today's Gospel indicates as Christ, the bread of life.

In today's Second Reading, Ephesians 4:30-5:2, we are told not to 'grieve the Holy Spirit of God' in whom we have 'sealed for the day of redemption'. This is in continuation of the Second Reading of last Sunday, 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Ephesians 4:17, 20-24, when asked to 'put on the new man, created after the likeness of God'. This signifies that we are to leave our ways of sinful and negative life and start being real Christ-like, both in words and deeds. In doing this, we are to be guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

'And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant and sacrifice to God.' (Ephesians 5:2) Serious Christians, no doubt, are concerned with the great value of love as the value without which there can be no lasting happiness. It is the embodiment, visible expression, of Christ's message. Our expression of Christ's love in our relationships with one another is to be treasured. It must not be taken for granted.

In the words of Fr James Valladares, a Diocesan Priest and Counselling Psychologist, in his book, 'A Drop of INK can make millions THINK' (2019), published while being 50 years

a Priest: 'Value has a value only if its value is valued.

Christ's love must continuously be valued as it is without any adulteration. Christ's love is pure. With the purity of heart, we are to keep exhibiting Christ's love to one another, wherever and whenever. Love is sharing and it gives joy. We must not hoard love. To hoard love, and our God-given gifts, talents, is to be enslaved, to be lonely and sad.

My Brothers, Sisters and Friends, let us not be like children, who take wealth for granted. God chose you and me, and other people, but He did so freely, not out of necessity. Let us show our gratitude by being guided by the precious insight that there is no greater value than love.

'God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God is in him.' (1 John 4:16)  
With this, you, including me, are enjoined to 'be imitators of God, as beloved children'. Also, being new people, created after the likeness of God Himself, you are to 'let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you'(Ephesians 4:31-32).

In the Gospel - John 6:41-51, again, using the symbolism of bread, Jesus indicates that we need him on our journey through life. This is why he tells us in Matthew 28:20 that

he is with us always. Since Jesus assures us that he is with us always, we should hold on firmly to him and be not afraid. He is our strength (Philippians 4:13) and we are to find solace in him, even in our dark moments, dark periods. Human beings can disappoint, but Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, can never disappoint.

'I (Jesus) am the bread of life.... If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever.' This depicts the fact that a person related to Jesus Christ will not die the death of alienation from God. Notably, the essential condition for this is faith (trust) in the Lord Jesus as Jesus himself states: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life'.

To move closer to Jesus is to accept him as the source of our strength and inspiration in our daily struggles in the journey of life. Christ is ever present with us. Our response to and practice of Christ's invitation must not be a one-off, but constant. We need to be consistent in our journey of Faith, Hope and love.

Despite our myriads of problems in Nigeria, we need to keep hope alive in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. We are to keep learning Christ and continue to maintaining living our knowledge of him within and outside our environments - Family, Church, Workplace, School, Playing Field, Politics. From all our terrors the Lord is prepared to set us free. Thus, we need to always seek refuge in him and have total, complete, confidence in him.

My Brothers, Sisters and Friends, rather than murmuring like the Jews did at Jesus, let us resolve to commend our worries, troubles, sorrows, and even our happiness, into Christ's hands in the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist (the Mass) daily where Christ feeds us with himself for spiritual strength in our journeys. In Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God is ALWAYS with us.

'Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration.' (Quoted in Daily Reflections: God's Word 2021) The Holy Eucharist must always be celebrated prayerfully and solemnly according to the teachings and the guidelines of the Catholic Church. It is Christ's own Celebration, Mass, given to the Catholic Church and be celebrated by the Church for his Memorial.

We should learn to give thanks to God in Christ (even if it is brief) in the Tabernacle after the Mass, instead of rushing out of the Church immediately after the Mass. This is showing our gratitude to Christ after the Spiritual Meal. Let us also cultivate the habit of perpetual adoration of Jesus Christ in the Tabernacle.

Catholic Christians see the Eucharistic bread and wine, signs of Christ's mysterious presence to us, as a viaticum, 'food for our journey' to the mount where we hope to meet God (Today's First Reading). Gratefully, we should 'take and eat' as the Lord has

told us to do, and he continues to give us himself at every Eucharistic Celebration. Let us value this everlasting treasure of Christ left for us as his Memorial.

'Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for you are my praise.' (Jeremiah 17:4)

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 34)

Taste and see that the Lord is good!

I will bless the LORD at all times,

praise of him is always in my mouth.

In the LORD my soul shall make its boast;

the humble shall hear and be glad.

Taste and see that the Lord is good!

Glorify the Lord with me;

together let us praise his name.

I sought the LORD, and he answered me;

from all my terrors he set me free.

Taste and see that the Lord is good!

Look towards him and be radiant;

let your faces not be abashed.

This lowly one called; the Lord heard,

and rescued him from all his distress.

Taste and see that the Lord is good!

The angel of the LORD is encamped

around those who fear him, to rescue them.

Taste and see that the LORD is good.

Blessed the man who seeks refuge in him.

Taste and see that the Lord is good!

Please, let us remember that Next Sunday, 15/8/2021, is the Solemnity of The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

With confidence in God and Christ being our strength, wherever God leads us, we FOLLOW with joy, commitment and happiness.

Most Rev. Felix Femi Ajakaye

Bishop of Ekiti.