

Divine service



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider

Unedited

Day / Date	Sunday, January 17, 2021
Place / Country	Strasbourg, France (for North America)
District Apostle district	Leonard Kolb Mark Woll
Bible text	<i>Matthew 17:15-16... Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.</i>
Opening hymn	#2 All creatures of our God and King
Accompanied by	n/a
Called to serve	n/a
Official Acts	n/a
Translation	French and Spanish
Broadcast	To all North America via webstreaming
Attendance	Estimated 22,893 connected via the internet

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Almighty God, dear heavenly Father, we came together today in spirit to worship You and to adore You. You are the almighty God. Nothing is impossible for You. You are the God of love and of kindness, and You love each and every one. You are the God of wisdom. You know everything. You understand everything. You are the God of perfection, and You want to fulfill Your work of salvation. This is our comfort. We thank You for that. We know also that You are our heavenly Father who cares for us. Together we pray for all those who suffer, we pray for those who are in grief; please comfort them. Grant them Your help in this difficult time. We pray also for the sick ones. Please reduce their pain and if it is possible let them recover. Be with them and let them experience Your nearness and Your love. We pray for all those who have to face great dangers. They live in countries where there is war, where there is violence. Please protect them, and as soon as possible grant peace. Dear heavenly Father You know all the sorrows and concerns of Your children. They need Your help. They need to experience Your kindness, but also Your power. Let them know that You are their almighty God and their heavenly Father. Now dear heavenly Father, we long for Your grace, for Your peace. We need to be taught. We need to know what You want us to do. Grant us Your word and Your light through the Holy Spirit. Grant us much more than we can ask in words. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

My dear brothers and sisters, for this service we have a Bible word out of Matthew, chapter 17, verses 15 and 16... *Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.*

Musical piece: Amazing Love

CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER

My dear brothers and sisters, this is a unique and special service for me today. I am here in a quite, empty church. There are just two brothers here in charge of the technology. Otherwise the church is empty, and you are sitting somewhere in North America, probably at home. So, it makes this service it very special. But I am absolutely sure that the Holy Spirit is at work here and in your home, and that through the efficiency of the Holy Spirit we can experience the presence of God and receive His grace and His blessing. You know we are going through a special time, and we can learn a lot in this special time. As far as I am concerned, I became even more aware how much we are dependent on God's grace to receive the food, the nourishment, that our soul needs. Remember the people of Israel when they crossed the desert. They were fully dependent on God's grace for their nourishment. God decided what they got and when they got it. That is the same for us. We realize that we are fully dependent on God's grace. He gives us what He wants to give us when He wants to give it to us. We just have to be humble and trust Him, and take the food that He gives us whenever

He gives it and He provides it. We trust Him. He will give us whatever we need to reach our goal. As with the people of Israel, those who trusted God reached their goal at the end of the story.

The Bible word is about this great miracle Jesus did when He healed this epileptic son. It seems to be an important event in the Bible because it is related in three gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke – in a different way, but it is the same story. To summarize it: Jesus came back from the Mount of Transfiguration with the three disciples, Peter, James and John. And He met the other disciples who were in a big discussion with the scribes because a father came to them and brought them his son who was sick, an epileptic, and he wanted them to heal him, and they could not. So there was a big discussion. I assume that the scribes said: Hey, you do not really have the power to do that – or even worse – your Master does not come from God because you are not able to heal this man. Then Jesus came. Jesus healed the epileptic son. What is the meaning, the sense of this miracle? To get the true meaning, we have to consider the cultural background of the story. You know, for the Jews at the time, the health of the body was a consequence of the health of the soul. Physical health was related to spiritual health. If someone was sick, that meant for them that it was a consequence of sin – his sin or the sin of the parents. That explanation was that he was possessed by an unclean spirit, a demon. As a result, sick people were considered unclean because they were obviously sinners, or they were possessed by an unclean spirit. So they were just unclean and were pushed to the fringes of society. They were not accepted. They could not fulfill their task and were just rejected. This son was a typical case. He was sick. He could not control his body, his movements, and it is said that he was deaf and dumb. He could not hear, he could not talk, he could not communicate with others. He was really outside society. But Jesus healed him. He wanted to show through this miracle that He was sent by God, He had the authority of God. He could act as God does, He heals people, He can forgive sins, cure the soul, He has power and authority over the evil spirits. He can re-establish the fellowship between man and God, and He can also lead the isolated ones back to the people of God and they are again accepted as members of the people of God. Jesus wanted to show: See, I am sent by God to bring salvation. Sins are forgiven, you can have fellowship with God, you can have fellowship with the people of God. I am stronger than the evil one. That is the meaning of the miracle done by Jesus.

But for Jesus it was also important to explain that to experience this salvation, to be saved, you need to believe. When He performed miracles He always insisted: Your faith has done you well. You have been saved because of your faith. Nothing is impossible for those who believe. He always underlined the importance: You have to believe. When they did not, He told them: You are people of poor faith. It is because of your unbelief that you could not do that. For Him it was important - to be saved, to experience the power and salvation of Jesus Christ, you have to believe and you have to have true faith. He explained what that means. Once He said: You know, not all

those who say to Me “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of God, only those who do the will of My Father. That is true faith – doing the will of God. Today there are still many people who proclaim: We are Christians! That is nice, that is okay. They gather together to pray and praise the name of the Lord. That is nice. Many know the Bible by heart. I admire them. They have a Bible verse for each situation. That is nice. But that is definitely not enough to be saved. To be saved, you must do the will of God. You must live according to the Ten Commandments. You must live according to the commandment of love for God and for your neighbour. You have to shape your life according to the teaching of Jesus Christ, in the way you make your decisions, in the way you express yourself, in the manner you consider your neighbour and how you treat him. That is true faith. Living according to the Ten Commandments, living according to the commandment of love for your neighbour, love for God, in the way you express yourself, in the way you make your decisions, you shape your life, you treat your neighbour, you consider him – that is faith. That is essential to be saved. Jesus wants to save us from the domination of evil, He wants to lead us into the kingdom of God. For that, we need to have faith. That is the way we prepare ourselves for the future.

But Jesus also wants to heal us today. That is an ongoing process. He wants to deliver us, He wants to heal us, He wants to cure our soul. For sure, He still has the power and authority to perform miracles. If someone is sick, if we have to face hardship, if we are involved in huge problems, we pray and we do hope that Jesus can save us, can deliver us, can help us, and we trust Him. We pray in a humble manner, as Jesus did, and say: If it is possible, can You heal me? If it is possible, can You solve this problem? If it is possible, can You help my neighbour, my child, my parents? We hope and pray and sometimes Jesus does, because He still has this power, but our priority should always be - I want to remain faithful. My priority is to do the will of God. My priority is to enter the kingdom of God. My priority is to become an image of Jesus Christ. Please help me. Please deliver me from the burden. But first of all, please help me to remain faithful. We have faith – that means that we trust God. He will do the right thing at the right moment. Jesus wants to heal us, He comforts us through His love. Even in most difficult times we can experience His love, His kindness, His nearness, and we experience – yes, really, He is with me. That is something we cannot explain, one has to experience it. I know that many of you have already experienced this and are experiencing it. The times are very difficult, we have a heavy burden to carry, but we know: Jesus is with me. He loves me. That cannot be explained with words but that is our conviction, that is our experience. Jesus comforts us.

He also wants to cast out unclean spirits through His teaching. That is an ongoing process. It is something that Jesus wants to do through His teaching. Today there are so many opinions in the world, amongst people, even in our circle. I am quite sure that if we would discuss politics we would never come to an agreement. If we discuss the environment, if we discuss about economics, if we discuss about music or food or

whatever you want, we would never come to a general agreement. That is alright. That is not a problem. It is definitely not the task of the Church to say: This idea is a good one and that is a bad one, this opinion is right and that opinion is wrong. That is not the task of the Church. As far as I am concerned, I will not and cannot say: This is right and that is wrong. But it is the task of the Church, of the Apostolate, to say: Be careful, and check what kind of spirit is now at work. In our midst there are also many opinions. The ones say: These changes are going too fast. Others say: No, we should change quicker. We should change many more things in our Church. Both are absolutely convinced that they are right. What can I say? There would be endless discussion about that. I consider it my first task as the Chief Apostle, the first task of the Apostles, to make the faithful, the believers, aware: Be careful and check what spirit is at work. Is it the Holy Spirit? Or is it an unclean spirit, an evil spirit? It is quite easy to find out you know. Just check, where does this spirit want to lead me? You can recognize the evil spirit in the fact that he wants you to drift away from Jesus Christ. I am a little bit concerned these days because sometimes I am surprised by the way some of our members react, and I think to myself: That cannot be inspired by the Holy Spirit. When it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, then the fruit is peace, love, kindness, self-control. That is the fruit of the Holy Spirit – love, peace, kindness, self-control. When it is an evil spirit, the reaction is quite different. Let us check the spirit who sent these ideas, these opinions, in the way we react, in the way we consider our neighbour, in the way we react when we are attacked, when we have to face hardship, in the way we behave and we express ourselves. When I look on the internet, the way some people express themselves, then it is definitely clear – that is not the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants to cast out these evil spirits through His teaching. He reminds us: Please consider My teaching. Be careful. You are drifting away from it. He wants to cast out this evil spirit.

He also wants to deliver us from selfishness through His teaching. I said this poor boy was deaf and dumb. He could not communicate. Today that is a danger for many people, especially in difficult times. They become deaf and dumb. They are no longer interested in the fate of others. They are only interested in their own wellbeing, fate, and interest. Jesus wants to deliver us from selfishness through His teaching. He wants to help us through His calling. Some have the feeling: I have no place in this Church, even no place in society. I am useless. I cannot do anything. That is also a suffering. I am not good enough. I am not considered. Jesus reminds us: Hey, I have called you. You are My servant. I need you, I want you to do good, I want you to help others, I want you to proclaim My name and to be My witness. I called you. You are not useless. You are a witness of Jesus Christ. Do not forget that. These are different ways Jesus wants to heal us and to cast out evil and unclean spirits, to deliver us from them.

Let us make a break and listen to a musical piece.

#15 – Holy, Holy, Holy

CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER

Dear brothers and sisters, I know you saved the time you normally need to get to church, and I assume you are comfortable sitting at home, so allow me to add another thought about this young man. The father came and said, “This evil spirit, this demon, is going to kill my son because he is throwing him into the water; he is throwing him into the fire. If this continues, he will die.” So he worried about his son and actually also about his own future because, for the Jewish people, the children were their own personal future. So he worried about the future of his son and about his own future and he wanted the disciples of Jesus Christ to heal his son, to solve the problem, because they were thought to have a special power, a special authority. They could not. When Jesus came He said: Just trust, just believe. I can help. I can deliver him. In other words – I can save your future. But you have to trust, to believe in Me and to trust. The father said: I believe, but help my unbelief. The disciples said: Why could we not do that? He said: You should pray. In the gospel of Matthew there is something added that is not in the other gospels. Actually, they found out that it has been added in some copies of the old texts, that you need to pray and you need to fast. That is an addition that came later on. But, it is interesting that He said: to do this miracle, to be healed, you need to believe, to trust. You need to pray, and you need to fast. Let us come to our situation. I know that many faithful children of God are very concerned by the future of the Church because they see – and that is true, that is reality – there is a negative trend. That is an unfavourable evolution. If it goes that way, what will the future of the Church be? I understand; I share this concern. I can understand it. Some say: This negative trend, this negative evolution – the Apostles are supposed to have the authority and they cannot help. They cannot stop it. It goes on. Brothers and sisters, the Master is still here, and the Master is Jesus Christ. He takes care of His flock. He will fulfill His work of salvation. All we have to do is to trust Him and remain faithful. To believe, to act, and to shape our life according to our faith, and to trust the Lord, that is our common task. That is our duty.

We also have to pray. That applies to the Chief Apostle, for all the Apostles, and for all the members. We have to pray. We cannot consider: Yes, the Apostles have the authority, the ministers have part of the authority, and they can do it; they can manage because they have the power and authority. That is not enough. For sure, Jesus has given the authority to the Apostles, but we need both. We need the authority given by Jesus, and we also need prayers. Because salvation is not a “due,” it is not automatic. It is a grace granted by Jesus Christ, and all of us, from the Chief Apostle to the smallest child, we have to pray: Please Lord, save us. Grant us this grace. That is an important part. We cannot say: Oh, that’s done; we are saved – because we have the Apostles, we have the Holy Spirit. We need to pray, to struggle for our salvation. Please God, grant me Your grace. Then we have to fast. Do not worry; it is not about food. For me, I have a spiritual explanation for this fasting. When one fasts, that means

he eats less, maybe drinks less, but actually, he concentrates on what is really needed to live. He is concentrated on what is essential and vital for him to remain alive. That is a hint for us – for us the Apostles, but also for all ministers and even for all members. For sure we have plenty of things to deal with in our Church. We have to deal with financial issues, we have to deal with buildings and their maintenance, we have to deal with music, we have to organize activities, and there are a lot of things to do and deal with, and that is okay. But we should never forget that all these points are not essential. One could even do without music. I would never have believed that, but now I experience it. We should never forget what is essential for salvation. What is essential is to remain steadfast in the doctrine of the Apostles, in fellowship, in prayers, and in breaking of bread. That is definitely vital. That is definitely essential. So if we are told here that we should fast a little bit, that means for me, first we focus on what is essential - the doctrine of the Apostles, the teaching of the death, the resurrection, and the return of Jesus Christ. That is the doctrine of the Apostles. That is essential. Be focused on fellowship, unity of the people of God, soulcare, love, that is essential – fellowship, soulcare, love, unity. Be concentrated on prayers, as I said, and be focused on breaking of bread. Again today, we cannot celebrate Holy Communion. The danger is that after a certain time we think: Okay, it is nice to have Holy Communion, but obviously it is not vital because we can do without it. Remember the story of the people of Israel in the desert. Celebrating Holy Communion is, and remains, essential. We need it for salvation. But we are fully dependent on God's grace. Let us take it and celebrate it as often and as soon as Jesus invites us. That is the rule. When Jesus invites us to celebrate Holy Communion we come and celebrate it.

Let us remain focused on what is essential – the doctrine of the Apostles. That means the doctrine of the death, resurrection and return of Jesus Christ. Let us be focused on fellowship, love, unity, soulcare. Let us pray for our salvation and let us follow the indication of the Holy Spirit when He invites us to celebrate Holy Communion. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, we also have the opportunity today to receive forgiveness of our sins and to receive the peace of the Risen One. We should trust and obey, and we realize that quite often, we did not. Jesus could come to me today and say: Oh man of little faith. Sometimes, we think because of things happening in our life: Oh, Jesus has forgotten me. He no longer loves me. Jesus comes and says: Why do you not trust My love? I laid down My life for you. I died for you. Why do you not trust My love? Sometimes He tells us: You know that My way is the right way, that My law is the truth. Why did you go another way? Why have you chosen another solution? Did you not trust Me? Sometimes when the fear about the future becomes just too much, too big, He tells us: Why do you not trust Me? I am the overcomer. I have power on earth and in heaven over every domination. I am the strongest one. Why do you not trust Me? These are just a few examples where Jesus could say: People of poor faith, why do you not trust Me? But it is nice - He does not reject us, He does not condemn us, He tells us: Please trust Me. I forgive you. I forgive you this lack of faith. I forgive you this

lack of trust. It is alright. Come, I erase that mistake. That weakness, I erase it. Then He gives us the peace of the Risen One and for me He does as He did for this young boy – He gave him His hand and lifted him up. That is my wish that all of us today can experience, just through the forgiveness of sins and the peace of the Risen One, that Jesus says: You did not trust Me. You did not trust My love. You did not trust my word. You did not trust My power, but I forgive you. It is okay. Come. I love You. Trust Me. I will fulfill My Work.

To prepare ourselves for forgiveness of sins, we will listen to the hymn of repentance, “Blessed be His name.”

Lord’s Prayer

Absolution

Prayer

Almighty God, dear heavenly Father, we thank You for Your grace and for the forgiveness of our sins. We thank You for Your love and Your patience. We thank You for the salvation You granted us. We thank You for the wonderful future You have prepared for us. We thank You for Your help and guidance in our daily life. We thank Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, for His sacrifice; we thank Him for His promise to come quickly, for His love and His presence in our midst. We thank the Holy Spirit for His light and for His teaching. We thank Him for His wisdom. We thank Him for the work He does to prepare us for the return of Christ. Dear heavenly Father, we pray for all the Apostles and all their co-workers. We pray for all the sisters and brothers who serve You with love and faith. Please bless their service, their love, and their faith. We pray especially for our youth and our children. Please protect them. Let them experience the power of the gospel. Fill their hearts with Your joy and with Your strength. Dear heavenly Father, many have become tired in their faith. Please help them to find the way back into Your house. Help us to find the souls You want to add to Your people. Now, dear heavenly Father, we pray once more for all those who suffer, all those who are anxious. Please grant them Your help. Grant peace. Do not forget man, wherever they live. You love them. Care for them. Then dear heavenly Father, please send Your beloved Son and take us into Your kingdom. That is our wish, that is our longing. Now bless also the offerings Your people have brought to You and grant us the protection of Your angels for the future. Grant us much more than we can ask in words. We ask it all in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Benediction

CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER

So, my dear brothers and sisters, that was it. Thanks for your participation and especially thanks for your prayers, your support, for your financial participation, your



offerings, and thanks for all the things you do. I do not know, but I can see the result. God goes on blessing His people, and that is also that you never give up serving Him. I wish you all the best for the coming time. I wish you God's help, protection, and blessing, and my wish is to see you as soon as possible.