

*Bible Text: Jude:20... But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,*

**Opening Prayer**

In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Almighty God, dear heavenly Father, it is with great joy and gratitude that we have come together this morning for this feast of Pentecost. We thank You, we praise Your name and we worship You. You are the almighty God for whom nothing is impossible, who knows all people and loves them all without exception. You understand everyone.

We thank You that we have been able to experience Your love and Your closeness so often. We thank You for the salvation that You give us, that You want to give to people.

We thank You for Your mercy and Your patience for us and for our fellow human beings. We thank You for the future that You have prepared. We need not fear the future; the future is the eternal communion of mankind with God. We are grateful for this with all our hearts. We thank You for Your help in our daily lives. We thank You for the blessings You give us again and again. We thank You for the fellowship of God's children.

Father, we also come to You to pray to You together. We pray for the many, many people who are in great need. You know more about this than we do. But it is a matter close to our hearts to tell You, dear God, help people, alleviate the need, turn the situation around, give them peace, security and safety.

We pray for our sick, for the afflicted, we pray for those who have become weak in faith. Give them the special grace to recognize You again and to be able to find their way back to You.

Now, Father, we long for Your peace, Your word and Your blessing. Let your Holy Spirit be effective and let us experience Your presence. Hear us for Jesus' sake, Amen.

***Bible Reading: Acts 2:36-43***

**CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER**

Dear brothers and sisters, as we learned from the account of Pentecost, Pentecost was not only the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but also the beginning of the work of the Apostles in the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter proclaimed the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and preached that Jesus Christ is the Messiah who was sent by God, died for us, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. He also announced that He would come again, and on His day, the day of the Lord, He would save those who believe in Him, are baptised and have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. That was a résumé of the Pentecost sermon, the first sermon preached by an Apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we heard in the Bible reading, three thousand people believed this preaching and were baptized. The first congregations remained steadfast in this teaching of the Apostles and in the proclamation of the gospel. Over time, false teachers arose here and there who spread a different doctrine that no longer corresponded to the Apostles' teaching. Then the Apostles and the ministries who were responsible, like Jude, had to intervene and say: "Don't do that, stick to the Apostles' teaching, stick to the gospel. It is not enough for you to stick with it, you must also build yourselves up, that is, mould your lives according to the gospel, according to the Apostles' teaching. This is just as important for us today. Even today, there are always false teachers who spread something else, but that is not our topic right now. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are able to discern these spirits, recognize the false teachings and reject them. We have received this gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us to do this in the sermon, or we can involve the spiritual care providers, we can pray.

The message today is actually about the next point, as Jude said. It is not enough just to believe in the Apostles' teaching, but we should build our lives on it. In concrete terms, this means that the gospel, the teaching of the Apostles, should determine our decisions in daily life. There is a great danger that our faith will become merely theoretical. Yes, I am a New Apostolic, I believe in the gospel and the teachings of the Apostles. But this faith is only marginally active and only marginally influences our decisions in life, but otherwise we pretty much do what we want. This is dangerous for our salvation. That is why the Holy Spirit tells us: Watch out, it is not enough to believe, but this faith must also produce something. It should determine our decisions in life. Why can it happen that this faith is no longer so strong and we become weak in faith and it no longer determines our decisions? There can be several reasons for this, and I would like to mention two of them: Firstly, you may be disappointed because what you believed did not materialize and everything turned out differently. Or you may be a little unsettled because what you believed in has changed. Today, something different is preached, something different is said and now you are unsettled when that is no longer true. So why should the rest still be true? This is a phenomenon that I notice from time to time. Some brothers and sisters are unsettled when they realize that something that was taught that is now different.

What does this message say today? Build your life on your most holy faith. That is the point. We need to focus on holy faith. What is holy faith? Holy faith is what comes from the Holy God, from the Holy Spirit, what comes directly from God, what comes from Jesus Christ. Why do I say that? Because our personal faith is multi-layered. First and foremost, it is based on the Bible, the Gospel, the teachings of the Apostles in the biblical sense. In other words, the way the Apostles of that time preached and wrote down the gospel in the gospels, in the letters of the Apostles. That is the Apostles' teaching. It has nothing to do with our preaching today. When it comes to the Apostles' teaching, the gospel is preached by the Apostles. That is the basis of our faith. But there are other things as well. First of all, our upbringing. Many of us were brought up New Apostolic. Our parents, our predecessors, the ministers, have given us a number of pieces of advice and instructions on how to deal with offering in order to be blessed;

how to deal with prayer in order to be blessed, how to behave. This is a whole series that we have all received through our upbringing.

Then we got older and grew up and had our experiences in the meantime. We realized that if we do it this way and walk this path, then the good Lord answers and helps me. That is something very beautiful, it is a richness. I have experienced that when you do it this way, God blesses you and acts.

Our faith is also based on the many sermons we have heard over the decades. Of course, this sermon also includes interpretations of Bible words, images that are familiar to us, that simply belong to us. The stories we have heard and what has been preached. This has all become part of our faith and is also something very beautiful. It is part of our faith.

The fifth and final thing is the promises we have been given: Don't worry, you will get well, the good Lord will help. We could go on and on about how often these promises were given. We have experienced it, the Apostle has said it, the Priest has told me, we have prayed and believed and the good Lord has helped. What he told me has come true. That is the whole body of our faith. All of this is not to be equated with the most holy faith, because it is a beautiful mixture of what comes directly from God and what comes from people. It's very valuable, I'm not minimizing it. But you just have to realize that it is not valid everywhere and not for everyone. We realize that ourselves. We did it five times and it worked. The sixth time we did exactly the same thing and it didn't work. Why? We were promised it, we believed it, we prayed, we did everything we were told and the promise didn't materialize. Now we realize again that in another country it's seen completely differently. Now there is a problem: If it is the word of God, then it is always and everywhere valid. Why doesn't it work now? Why is that no longer valid here, why has it changed now? Jude gives us the advice here, focus on the most holy faith, on what is truly from God and what is always valid for you, what is valid for all of God's people; that is the gospel, the teaching of Jesus Christ, which is preached by the Apostles.

These fundamental elements of our faith are summarized in our creed, in the ten Articles of Faith. What does our holy faith actually consist of? We believe in God, the almighty Creator. Nothing is impossible for Him, He does exactly what He wants. We believe in Jesus Christ, He has revealed God to us. We believe in His mission, we believe in His death, in His resurrection, in His ascension, in His return and in His teaching. He has shown us God as He is: God is love, He wants the salvation of mankind. We believe in that. We believe in the Holy Spirit. God works on earth today through the Holy Spirit. We cannot see Him, but we can perceive His work. God is present on earth, He works in the Holy Spirit.

Fourth point, to summarize: We believe in eternal life. The salvation that God will give us is the eternal fellowship of mankind with God. We can attain it at the return of Christ. As the firstfruits, we can attain this salvation, enter the kingdom of God and have eternal

fellowship with God. For other people there is the possibility of attaining salvation and eternal life in the kingdom of peace. Then all people who are saved will live in eternal fellowship with God in the new creation. This is the salvation that God gives us, and we believe in it. The fifth point: In order to attain this salvation, we need the Church of Christ. That is indispensable. We need the sacraments, we need the Apostles sent by Jesus Christ and we need the ministries chosen by God and endowed by the Apostles with part of their authority. This is our most sacred faith. Very briefly summarized: Faith in the almighty God, in Jesus Christ, who showed us God as He is, in the Holy Spirit. God works today in the Holy Spirit, He gives us salvation, eternal life. In order to attain this eternal life, we need the Church, the sacraments, the Apostleship, the ministries. This has not changed at all in recent years. It is valid all over the world, in Africa, in America, everywhere. Let us build our lives on this basis.

Let this belief in these elements, which I have now reduced to five, determine our decisions in daily life. What does that mean? First of all: I believe. So the word of Jesus Christ always carries more weight for me than what people tell me. The word of Jesus Christ, the word of God, should determine my life.

Second consequence: I believe that whatever may come, I trust in the omnipotence and love of God. That is very concrete. Whatever happens, I trust in God's omnipotence and God's love. If you think about this, you realize that it very quickly becomes very concrete when it comes to making decisions in everyday life.

Another consequence: I strive for eternal life first. Fellowship with God is the most important thing for me. That has absolute priority: My personal fellowship with God in heaven, for eternity. But already today I want to be with Jesus, I want to have fellowship with Him. That determines my decision in life. That is our most sacred faith. I believe in eternal life.

Another consequence, very concrete: In my life, I believe in the preaching of Jesus Christ, so I also believe that it is very important to keep the commandment of love, of love for God and love for our neighbour. This should become very concrete in our decisions. I know I have said this so often, but I will continue to say it because it is so important. Loving God means that whatever I do for God, I do it out of love for God, because He gives, and has given me so much, and not out of calculation. I come back to the good advice, the experiences, the recipes that have been given to us. That's all perfectly fine. I just have a little problem with it sometimes. Sometimes there's a bit of calculation involved. If you do this or that, then God will give you this or that. But that's not love. We should grow in love and love as Jesus Christ loved, without calculation. If we do something for God, keep His commandments, serve Him, it is for one reason only: above all, because He loves us. Because He gives us so much. Because He has given us so much and because He will give us so much. That is why we are obedient, that is why we follow God and that is why we serve. This love should determine our decisions. There is still room for improvement.

Love for our neighbour should also very specifically determine our decisions in daily life. Sometimes it's a bit too much theory, lots of words and unfortunately few deeds. I don't want to preach morality now. When I get a bit embarrassed, I always fall back on my African experience. Africans have a beautiful story to speak for the love of one's neighbour. A priest comes to a man and says, do you actually love your neighbour? Of course I do! So if you had two houses right now, would you give one house to a poor person? Yes of course, I love my neighbour. If you had two cars, would you give one car to a poor person? Yes of course, I love my neighbour! If you had two coats, would you give one coat to a poor person? No! Why not? Because I actually have two coats! Just a little story from Africa but so meaningful. I don't want to say any more about it, I'm just asking you - I'm including myself - to just take it with you. Words, but also very concrete actions. Part of the most sacred faith is that we believe that Jesus expects us to love God above all else and our neighbour as ourselves. Every now and then this should also become concrete.

One last point: Concrete decisions in our lives. We believe that the Church, the Apostle ministry, the sacraments and the ministries are essential for salvation. Brothers and sisters, we also want to make concrete decisions and decide once and for all that the Church is there primarily for our salvation. Of course there are material matters such as building, organization, various activities. That's all fine and important. But let's decide once and for all: If we belong to this Church, go to church services and are part of the congregation, then it is primarily for salvation. Everything else is definitely a minor matter. If there is something wrong with these secondary matters, it should not lead to me no longer going to church. The Church is not an organization or a nice club, it is given to me by God so that I can attain salvation. That is our faith and we want to stick to it. This faith should determine our decisions. Let us focus our profession of faith on the most sacred part of our faith. Everything else may be beautiful, important and valuable, but it is not the same as the most holy faith. Let us focus on this.

The good Lord helps, has given us a means by which we can find help: It is prayer. Pray in the Holy Spirit. Why is this written here? Because it goes together. To do the one, we have to do the other. The dear God helps us - when we pray to Him in the Holy Spirit - to focus on and build up the most holy faith. It is the almighty God, the God of love, who above all wants our salvation. When we pray to Him, the Holy Spirit tells us: "Don't forget what He has done for you, what He is doing for you, what He will do for you". Then things will be all right, many things will already be sorted out. The Holy Spirit tells us to focus on eternal life. Then our prayer includes above all: Dear God, strengthen my faith, help my unbelief, strengthen my love for You, strengthen my love for my neighbour.

Intercession. We pray for our neighbour, but above all for their salvation. Dear God, help me to be an instrument in Your hands so that I can contribute to the salvation of people. We do not dictate to God what He should do with our neighbour, but we ask Him to help them to achieve salvation.

The last petition, inspired by the Holy Spirit: Lord come soon! That is the message of today. We want to focus on the basic elements of our faith. They should determine our lives and our decisions. We can find help from God by praying in the Holy Spirit. May I make a wish today: It would be good if in the next services, the service leaders would again take up these thoughts a little and process them further, even if it is not in the guiding thoughts. It is very important to me that this message really gets through. Thank you for that. Amen.

### **CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER**

Dear brothers and sisters, all the District Apostles, all the District Apostle Helpers of the world have come together. We are very pleased that they can all be here. I looked to see who I have never called on Pentecost in the last ten years. I realized that I have never called Apostle Minio from Argentina on Pentecost. I invite him, he wants to serve us, he speaks wonderful Spanish. His serving will be translated.

### **DISTRICT APOSTLE MINIO**

Beloved congregation, dear sisters and brothers in the Lord. I am deeply grateful to be able to share this Pentecost with you. Through the sermon, my heart has once again heard the voice of God. He told us: I know you, I love you, I know what you have to bear every day. The same thing that happened in the congregations in the early days is still happening today. Our enemy wants to turn us away from our faith. But the good Lord has told us: I want to help you, I invite you to focus your life on the teaching of the Apostles.

The good Lord has given us this little summary of our most sacred faith. I believe in God, the Creator, I trust Him. I believe in Jesus Christ, the Saviour, I follow Him. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. I seek guidance from Him in the word and in the divine services. I believe in the salvation of the soul and in the return of Jesus Christ. This is at the centre of my heart. I believe in the Church and in the Apostolate. I know that this should strengthen me. But so that we can make our decisions, God has told us that the gospel is above traditions and rules. Jesus Christ stands above the Church. God has given us a conscience so that we can make decisions. God has given us the intellect. If we make decisions with our intellect and with our head, then that is something we do every day. But now you have to take this decision through the filter of the gospel. If you do that with the filter of the gospel, then you will not be disappointed.

Then He told us how our behaviour should be. Love in our behaviour towards our neighbour shows the love of God in us. God also teaches us that we should cover this behaviour and these decisions with prayer in the Holy Spirit. My heart should be focused on the promise and on eternal life. Everything else is given to us. How does praying in the Holy Spirit help me? It strengthens my relationship with God. The doctrine of the universal gospel. Who is God? Who are we? What should our relationship with God be like? What should the relationship among us be like? This should be the reason for our life, the reason for our life should be the teaching of the Apostles. Amen.

### **CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER**

Another District Apostle is District Apostle Edy Isnugroho from South-East Asia. He comes from Indonesia, works in the Philippines and in other countries, and we will also hear him. He will minister in English and the same choir will sing something beautiful for us once again.

### **DISTRICT APOSTLE ISNUGROHO**

Dear brothers and sisters, dear congregation. The Chief Apostle mentioned that our brothers and sisters from the time in which Jude lived were attacked by false teachers. These false teachers were driven by a different spirit and attacked the teaching of Jesus Christ, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Apostle's teaching. I see this very clearly in Indonesia, where I live. The majority do not believe in Jesus Christ and do not believe in the gospel. But I can also see more and more clearly that Christian teachers are not preaching the pure and true gospel of Jesus Christ either. They preach: If you want to live healthy, happy and rich, then come and believe in Jesus Christ. In Indonesia, we call this the prosperity gospel, which is being preached more and more frequently and is becoming increasingly popular. It is attracting more and more people, especially the young. The concept of salvation that is preached there is: Being healthy, happy and rich, that's all. Our Chief Apostle clearly stated this morning that salvation consists of eternal life. Eternal fellowship with God in His kingdom; not just living richly and well on earth. That is why it is also my concern as an Apostle of Jesus Christ that all brothers and sisters who are entrusted to me seek eternal life.

The Chief Apostle mentioned in his serving that we should focus on the ten Articles of Faith. In our Bible passage today it says that we should build our lives on our most holy faith. That is our responsibility, our task. We focus on our Articles of Faith and we build on them. Building is an ongoing process. Let us build our lives on the most holy faith.

The Chief Apostle mentioned two more things: Our faith in God and our love for God and our neighbour. We want to build up our faith and our love. How can we build up our faith and our love? Let the Holy Spirit rule our hearts, let us pray: God please teach me what to pray, how to think and how to act. Tomorrow I want to make decisions according to Your will. Next week, too, I want the Holy Spirit to rule in my heart. Then we will ask again, God, let us recognize Your will. I want to humbly make decisions according to Your will again. I will apply this in my daily life. This is an ongoing process.

After the children of God had heard Apostle Peter's sermon they repented and applied the Apostle's preaching. An ongoing, continuous process. Our Chief Apostle mentions again and again that we are experiencing a spiritual change in these times. Let us examine ourselves and ask ourselves, how is my faith today? It must be better than it was yesterday, and it must be better tomorrow than it is today. Also my love for God and my love for my neighbour; it is also an ongoing, continuous process. Lord, I want to become more and more like You. And the Spirit and the bride pray, Lord Jesus come soon. Let us build up our faith and our love in such a way that we grow into the nature of

Jesus Christ, so that we will also be a blessing for our neighbour, now and also in the thousand-year kingdom of peace. Amen.

**CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER – Preparation for the forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion**

Dear brothers and sisters, the District Apostle mentioned that Peter's sermon on Pentecost also included the call: Repent. In other words, repent. This is also part of the message of this Pentecost. Conversion presupposes that we judge ourselves correctly. Let's think about what has determined our decisions in recent days, months and years. Was it really our most sacred faith? It's worth thinking about this from time to time in order to assess yourself correctly. If you are in trouble, disappointed: was it your personal experience, was it human advice, did the good Lord really disappoint you when you believed in the Holy of Holies? Not at all. If we concentrate on this, we realize that we will never be disappointed. The good Lord doesn't reproach us for it, He gives us His grace and tells us what we didn't do quite right. But it's not bad, I give you My grace. But I will ask you one more question: Do you really want to do better next time? As the District Apostles said, it is now up to us to decide, do I really want to do it better, differently? If so, God gives us His perfect grace, reaches out to us and says: "Come on, let's try again together. I will give you the strength you need in Holy Communion."

***Hymn of Repentance***

***Lord's Prayer***

***Eucharistic Prayer***

Thank you very much, dear heavenly Father, for Your grace, the forgiveness of our sins, the salvation You give us. We thank our Lord Jesus for His sacrifice, for His love, for His care, for His salvation. We thank the Holy Spirit for leading and guiding us, for strengthening and comforting us. We thank You for the fellowship of the children of God. We thank You for the blessing that You give us again and again. We thank You that we have been able to experience You so often. Dear heavenly Father, we pray together for Your work. We pray for the Apostles and all the believers who support them in their task. We pray for the many congregations around the world. Fill them with Your Spirit, with Your light, with Your love and with Your peace. Let our congregations be a place where the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit can be experienced. We pray for the many people who do not yet know You. Let them come to You and learn and experience that You are the Almighty and that You are the God of love. Help us, we want to contribute to them finding the way to You. Father, help us too to become even stronger in our faith, in our love for God, in our love for our neighbour, so that this becomes more and more a reality in our lives.

Now we long to have fellowship with You and with one another in Holy Communion. Let Your Holy Spirit now become effective so that we can receive the body and blood of Jesus and have fellowship with our Saviour. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen

### ***Dispensation of Holy Communion***

#### **CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER – Preparation for Holy Communion for the Departed**

Yes, indeed, we believe in the activity of the Holy Spirit. We believe that God is present in this world as well as in the world beyond. We cannot see Him, but He is just as active and He continues to work for the salvation of people there too. This is a great comfort for us and for all those who miss a loved one who is already in the afterlife and perhaps had to leave far too soon. The almighty God, the God of love, the God of grace, continues to work for their salvation, just as He has worked here. This comforts us and strengthens us. Yes, we believe in the return of Christ, we believe that Jesus Christ will come and bring together His own in this world and in the hereafter and take them to Himself. We look forward to this encounter. We are sometimes criticized for living in the past. Every time I say that we are looking forward to seeing our loved ones again, I can imagine that this is not true for everyone. Brothers and sisters, we are not uncomfortable with the present. We haven't seen them again, then we see them again, we are very happy, we are together. We weren't that closely connected with all our brothers and sisters. I can understand that you want to see your wife, your children, your mother, your father, your friend again. But longing for a sister who sat in the pew would be an exaggeration. So it's not just nostalgia, because everything was nice in the past and then everything is fine again, we're together again, that's not the point. If we are looking forward to the reunion with the invisible church, it is because we are looking forward to seeing the great things that God has created in them. Then we will see how God has made them perfect through His work, through His word, the work of the Holy Spirit and His grace. Then we will rejoice, because then we will also be perfect, perfect in Jesus Christ, in the fellowship of those whom Jesus Christ has taken to Himself. It will be a wonderful congregation. All who are there from the world beyond, from this world, from the present and from the past, all perfect in Jesus Christ, all perfectly one. This fellowship is so beautiful that we can't even imagine it. This is not nostalgia, this is a deep joy for the future and an absolute confidence that God will create it. That is our joy.

We are pleased that we can also have a foretaste of this fellowship this morning in the celebration of Holy Communion with the departed, and we are glad to know that God is continuing to prepare them for this beautiful meeting. This morning, District Apostle Schulte from Australia and District Apostle Helper Nsamba from Kenya will receive Holy Communion for the departed. The choir will prepare the way.

### ***Dispensation of Holy Communion for the Departed***

#### ***Closing Prayer***

Dear heavenly Father, we simply feel the need to come to You together once again, even if only one of us speaks. You hear our thoughts, the thoughts of the soul. Dear heavenly Father, we thank You for Your grace, for Your love, for Your salvation, for forgiveness, for the peace of the Risen One, for Your blessing. We thank You once again for the confidence You give us. We know what lies in the future for us and we look

forward to it. Father, continue to be with Your children. Some of them have a difficult step to take in the coming days, a special decision to make. Be with Your own, guide them, lead them and keep them safe.

Bless the offerings, the service of Your own and give them again and again what they need in their daily lives. Father, remember all those who suffer great hardship in this world. Once again, very briefly but sincerely, we ask You to give us Your help. Give us Your angels' protection on our way home and give us the gift of prayer and understanding. Please shorten the time, send Your Son and take us all to Yourself. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

***Benediction***