

PASTORAL LETTER 2022

**WITH FAITH LET US BE ALWAYS PURE IN HEART
FOR GOD**

BY

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FOREWORD

Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

The wonderful teaching of Jesus Christ¹

1. My brothers and sisters, I am bringing before you the wonderful teaching and commandments of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Jesus Christ is the Word, as St. John has it in his gospel: *In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. ... The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:1-2, 14). Jesus Christ, who is the Word, is also the Son of God and also God. From the gospels, we can see the lots of teaching which Jesus Christ did when he was in the world. We need to read and listen to the teachings of Jesus Christ as they are in the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We can also see the teachings of Jesus Christ in the other parts of the New Testament – Acts of the Apostles, Letters of Paul, the Letter to the Hebrews, Letter of James, Letters of Peter, Letters of John, the Letter of Jude and the Book of Revelation. The people who wrote these Letters were apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ.

Saul who became Paul

2. Paul who was Saul was not originally a disciple or an apostle of Jesus Christ. After Jesus Christ had left the world, Saul was attacking the followers of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. He joined those who captured and killed Stephen, one of the seven people selected as helpers of the apostles in taking care of people in need. It was reported that the people who were stoning Stephen put down their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul (see Acts 7:59). It was also written that Saul approved of the killing of Stephen and Saul began doing great harm to the church and going from house to house to arrest men and women who were following the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ and he was sending them to prison (see Acts 8:1,3). Later, he decided to go to Damascus to persecute the believers there. As he was going to Damascus, Jesus Christ confronted with him saying: *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* And he asked: *Who are you, Lord?* And Jesus replied: *I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Get up and go into the city, and you will be*

told what you are to do. Saul and his companions went to Damascus and Ananias ordered by God converted him and baptised him and Saul became a wonderful preacher of Jesus Christ (see Acts 9:1-25). Saul, later called Paul became a very great follower of Jesus Christ. He said: *Take me as your pattern, just as I take Christ for mine* (1 Corinthians 11:1). He wants us also to pattern ourselves to Christ as he says: *As God's dear children, then, take him as your pattern, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up for us as an offering and a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God* (Ephesians 5:1-2). We have to be followers of Jesus Christ by following his teachings and commandments.

Let us be faithful to God

3. We in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi have very important reason to be really faithful to God. As you know, this Diocese was erected on 10th February 2002 with me, Most Rev. Hilary Paul Odili Okeke, as the first Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. I have been trying my best to keep all the people in the Diocese to be fully in faith. That is why I have been using faith to do the Pastoral Letter every year. Faith is very important and necessary. Jesus Christ appreciated people with faith and did his miracles in them. For example, a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhage for twelve years came to Jesus Christ saying to herself: *If only I can touch his cloak I shall be saved.* She touched the cloak of Jesus and was healed. Jesus turned around and saw her and said: *'Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you.'* *And from that moment the woman was saved* (see Matthew 9:20-22). Again, two blind men came to Jesus Christ requesting his healing them and Jesus Christ asked them: *'Do you believe I can do this?'* They said: *'Lord, we do.'* And Jesus Christ said to them, *'According to your faith, let it be done to you.'* And their sight returned (see Matthew 9:27-30). Jesus Christ really appreciated those who had faith in him. That was why he said: *Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me. But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone round his neck* (Matthew 18:5-6).

Importance of faith in our lives

4. The importance of faith led the apostles to highlight it in the scripture. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see what was said about faith: *These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the*

prayers ...And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed (Acts 2:42, 44-45). St. Paul shows the importance of faith: For I see no reason to be ashamed of the gospel; it is God's power for the salvation of everyone who has faith ... for in it is revealed the saving justice of God: a justice based on faith and addressed to faith. As it says in scripture: Anyone who is upright through faith will live (Romans 1:16-17). St. Paul was telling Philemon about his praying for faith: I always thank my God, mentioning you in my prayers, because I hear of the love and the faith which you have for the Lord Jesus and for all God's holy people. I pray that your fellowship in faith may come to expression in full knowledge of all the good we can do for Christ (Philemon 4-6). We see in Hebrews: We are not the sort of people who draw back, and are lost by it; we are the sort who keep faith until our souls are saved. Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of realities that are unseen. It is for their faith that our ancestors are acknowledged. ... Now it is impossible to please God without faith, since anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and rewards those who seek him (Hebrews 10:39; 11:1-2, 6).

Faith with good deeds

5. St. James showed the importance of faith with good deeds. That is why he says: *How does it help, my brothers, when someone who has never done a single good act claims to have faith? Will that faith bring salvation?... In the same way faith: if good deeds do not go with it, it is quite dead. But someone may say; So you have faith and I have good deeds? Show me this faith of yours without deeds! It is by my deeds that I will show you my faith.* James showed the faith of Abraham: *Was not Abraham our father justified by his deed, because he offered his son Isaac on the altar? So you can see that his faith was working together with his deeds; his faith became perfect by what he did. In this way the scripture was fulfilled: Abraham put his faith in God, and this was considered as making him upright; and he received the name 'friend of God' (see James 2:14-23).* Faith is very important. Because of the importance of faith I prepare all my teaching with faith and through faith. Let us, therefore, keep our mind, heart and soul always on faith in order to be good children of God.

Importance of faith by the Catholic Church

6. The Catholic Church shows the importance of faith: “Indeed, the mystery of the Christian faith provides them (Christians) with an outstanding incentive and encouragement to fulfill their role even more eagerly and to discover the full sense of the commitment by which human culture becomes important in man’s total vocation” (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 57). The Catholic Church in *On Dialogue with Unbelievers* said: “The attitude must be adopted and developed by believers with the utmost sincerity. The truths of faith, since they are revealed by God, are in themselves absolute and perfect. However, they are always imperfectly grasped by believers, who can increase their understanding of them and can meditate further on them (S.U. *Humanae Personae Dignitatem*, 28 August 1968). The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us about faith: “Faith is man’s response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 26). We should always act according to our faith in God in order to be able to earn eternal life.

Let us be followers of Jesus Christ

7. Christians are people who follow Jesus Christ. The disciples of Jesus Christ were growing. Jesus Christ had disciples, people following him and from them he chose twelve of them as his apostles: *These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon who is known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who was also his betrayer* (Matthew 10:2-4). Jesus Christ was with his apostles and disciples till he suffered and was crucified and died and after three days he rose from the dead. Forty days later, he ascended into heaven. As we know, Jesus Christ lost one of his apostles, Judas Iscariot who betrayed him and later hanged himself to death. Another disciple was taken also as an apostle to replace Judas Iscariot. His name was Matthias. The apostles led by Peter started preaching publicly from the coming of the Holy Spirit on them on Pentecost day. Indeed, on Pentecost day, Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed many people in Jerusalem and the people said to Peter and the other apostles, “*What are we to do, brothers?*” Peter answered: *You must repent, and every one of you must*

be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Many of them, about three thousand accepted and were baptised (see Acts 2:1-41).

Elected seven people to help the Apostles

8. The Apostles needed people who would help them to look after people in need due to the complaint of Hellenists against the Hebrews in the way the Hebrews were distributing to widows. The twelve Apostles got people to select people who would help them to look after the needy. Seven persons were elected to help the apostles in taking care of the people in need. They were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus (see Acts 6:1-7). Stephen was murdered by Israelites with Saul who approved of the killing and it was said: *Saul then began doing great harm to the church; he went from house to house arresting both men and women and sending them to prison (Acts 8:3).* He wanted to go to Damascus to arrest followers of Jesus Christ but Jesus Christ converted him through Ananias and Saul became a powerful follower of Jesus Christ, preaching at Damascus and later came back to Jerusalem. Barnabas was sent to Antioch and he brought Saul to Antioch. Their stay in Antioch brought out the Christianity: *And it happened that they stayed together in the church a whole year, instructing a large number of people. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'* (Acts 11:26). Thus, those baptised in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are called Christians.

Let us as Christians be friends of Jesus

9. Christians should be friends of Jesus Christ. Before his death, Jesus Christ was teaching the people and his disciples and apostles. We are people who should become friends of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ told his disciples to be his friends and not his slaves. He was urging them to keep his commandments: *I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love ...This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father (John 15:9-10, 12-15).* Those of us who have been baptised should do

what Jesus Christ said. He told his disciples: *Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time* (Matthew 28:19-20). As baptised Christians, we should be people who obey Jesus Christ and do what he taught and commanded. Jesus Christ came into the world to save people through his teachings and commandments. That is why those of us who have been baptised as Christians should obey Jesus Christ always. Obedience to him will surely grant those who obey him eternal salvation.

The Teaching of Jesus Christ

10. Jesus Christ taught a lot about what should lead his disciples to eternal life. Christians should obey the teachings of Jesus Christ. St. Matthew in his Gospel shows the teaching of Jesus Christ in a special way. One of them is called: The Sermon on the Mount. Jesus Christ gave the following teaching: *How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Blessed are the gentle; they shall have the earth as inheritance. Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness; they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful; they shall have mercy shown them. Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be recognized as children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness; the kingdom of Heaven is theirs* (Matthew 5:3-10). One of the teachings of Jesus Christ at the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount which we will study is: *Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God* (Matthew 5:8). This teaching is very important because it will help anybody who follows this teaching to be with God. Purity is the good thing for anybody who wants to gain eternal salvation in order to see God. Every Christian should endeavour to gain the purity of heart as stated by Jesus Christ in his teaching: *Blessed are the pure in heart. It is very necessary for Christians to be pure in heart in the way Jesus Christ said it. By being pure in heart, the person obeys Jesus Christ and will surely gain eternal life by seeing God.*

Pure in heart to meet God

11. It is true that Jesus Christ taught about pure in heart as a way to see God. Somebody said that purity was related to sexual purity but God's Word had much

to say about purity with regards to the heart, mind and soul of people. Purity in the lives of people has to cover all with everything that is according to the way of God. Pure in heart really makes a person completely faithful to God. Christians are expected to do exactly what Jesus Christ commanded in order to be pure in heart. Jesus Christ told people that evil would come from the heart: *But whatever comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and it is this that makes someone unclean. For from the heart come evil intentions: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander. These are the things that make a person unclean* (Matthew 15:18-20). Christians should make sure that their hearts are not unclean. This means that Christians should avoid sins in order to be pure in heart. Unfortunately, some Christians do things that are really evil. That is why St. Paul gave the warning about any Christian doing evil or committing sins: *Do you not realize that people who do evil will not inherit the kingdom of God? Make no mistake –the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the self-indulgent, sodomites, thieves, misers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers, none of these will inherit the kingdom of heaven. Some of you used to be of that kind: but you have been washed clean, you have been sanctified, and you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit of our God* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Going through the sacred scriptures we can see a lot of things which were written about purity. We will do our best to learn the purity required of us by Jesus Christ.

Importance of following the way of Jesus Christ by Christians

12. Christians must be careful to follow the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that we are in the world. However, we must be careful to know that we should not do anything which the world does if it is against the commandments of God. Jesus Christ told his disciples that they should avoid what the world was doing because his followers were in the world but did not belong to the world: *If the world hates you, you must realize that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because my choice of you has drawn you out of the world, that is why the world hates you* (John 15:18-19). Jesus Christ also prayed for his people saying: *I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the*

truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth (John 17:14-19). For Christians to have the purity of heart for God, they must be careful not to do what the world wants them to do if the matter is sinful as against the commandments of God.

With purity of heart we can see God

13. With faith let us do all as Christians to be pure in heart in order to see God. In the prayer of contrition in the Psalms, we can see what was prayed: *A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, nor deprive me of your holy spirit* (Psalm 51:10-11). St. Gregory of Nyssa did the homily on the Beatitudes with *Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God*, saying: All this sight of God is conditional on having a pure heart ... What if purity of heart is one of those unattainable things that is simply beyond our human nature? If, on the one hand, it is by purity of heart that God can be seen, and if, on the other hand, Moses and Paul did not see God and said that he could never be seen, it follows logically that purity of heart must be impossible, so that in pronouncing this Beatitude, the Word is putting forward something that simply cannot be (Homily of St. Gregory Nyssa on Beatitudes). Indeed, seeing God is the means of getting to the kingdom of God. Let us, therefore, keep away from evil and sins in order to have the purity of heart and be able to see God. Seeing the way of purity of heart in order to be children of God is very important for us as baptised Christians. We will see those who were not pure of heart in the Old Testament and New Testament. We will go through the commandments of God in order to learn how to keep away from sin in order to have purity of heart. We shall see the things which Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church would want us to do that will give us purity of heart. We will also see the saints and blessed persons who had purity of heart and are in the kingdom of God. Let us go properly through the Pastoral Letter for 2022: **WITH FAITH LET US BE ALWAYS PURE IN HEART FOR GOD.**

CHAPTER ONE

PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WITHOUT PURITY IN HEART

HOW DIFFERENT THE WICKED, HOW DIFFERENT! JUST LIKE CHAFF BLOWN AROUND BY THE WIND THE WICKED WILL NOT STAND FIRM AT THE JUDGEMENT NOR SINNERS IN THE GATHERING OF THE UPRIGHT (PSALM 1:4-5)

People in the Old Testament

14. The Old Testament had different things in the relationship of people with God. God created man as it was written in Genesis: *Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground. God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them* (see Genesis 1:26-27). In fact, God who created man expected human beings to do as he wanted and required of them. Doing the will of God was necessary for the people created by God. Those who would do according to God's commandments and will would be God's good people with purity in heart. They would be clean as God wanted them to be. But those who would disobey God to do things that were contrary to God's desires and commandments would be unclean before God. We can see that some people in the Old Testament were disobeying God and committing sins which made the people unclean, while some people in the Old Testament were obeying God and keeping purity of heart in their relationship with God.

People in the Old Testament without purity of heart

15. Many people in the Old Testament had no purity of heart with which to remain faithful to God because of their disobedience to God and because of doing contrary to God's way. The first people created by God, Adam and Eve, were deceived by the snake. God took the man who was called Adam and settled him in the garden of Eden and gave him the command: *You are free to eat of all the trees in the garden. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat; for, the day you eat of that, you are doomed to die* (Genesis 2:16-17). Unfortunately, the snake which was surely the devil deceived the wife of Adam

and she ate some of the fruit of the forbidden tree which God told them not to eat from and she gave to Adam who also ate the fruit from the forbidden tree. Of course, Adam and Eve had sinned by eating the fruit of the tree which God told them not to eat. God punished them for their sin. To the woman God said: *I shall give you intense pain in childbearing, you will give birth to your children in pain. Your yearning will be for your husband and he will dominate you* (Genesis 3:16). God also punished Adam saying: *Accursed be the soil because of you! Painfully will you get your food from it as long as you live. ... For dust you are and to dust you shall return* (Genesis 3:17-19). God continued: *Now that the man has become like one of us in knowing good from evil, he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and pick from the tree of life too, and eat and live for ever! So the Lord God expelled him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he had been taken. He banished the man, and in front of the garden of Eden he posted the great winged creatures and the fiery flashing sword, to guard the way to the tree of life* (see Genesis 3:17-24). It was evident that the people who disobeyed God were unclean and would be punished by God.

People in the Old Testament doing evil

16. From then, there were many people who were doing evil. For example, a son of Adam and Eve, Cain killed his brother, Abel. God said to Cain who killed his brother: *Listen! Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. Now be cursed and banned from the ground that has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood at your hands. When you till the ground it will no longer yield up its strength to you. A restless wanderer you will be on earth* (see Genesis 4:1-12). As it was clear, the sin of Cain made him unclean and he had penance from God. Some of the people then were doing what God saw as a lot of corruption of humanity. God saw that human wickedness was great on earth and that their hearts contrived nothing but wicked schemes all day long and the Lord said: *I shall rid the surface of the earth of the human beings whom I created - human and animal, the creeping things and the birds of heaven – for I regret having made them* (see Genesis 6:5-8). Really many of the people were opposed to God. They were corrupt: *God saw that the earth was corrupt and full of lawlessness. God looked at the earth; it was corrupt, for corrupt were the ways of all living things on*

earth (Genesis 6:11-12). That was why God decided to punish the corrupt things and people by killing them by flood: *And all living things that stirred on earth perished: birds, cattle, wild animals, all the creatures swarming over the earth, and all human beings* (Genesis 7:21).

Israelites released by God from Egypt

17. God showed his love for the Israelites at Egypt and released them from Egypt where they were being slaves. Unfortunately, most of them did not trust in God always. Sometimes, they would want to return to Egypt. God really wanted them to obey him and trust him. God gave them his commandments: *You shall have no other gods to rival me; You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God; Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy; Honour your father and your mother; You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not give false evidence against your neighbour; You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's house. You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's spouse, or servant, man or woman, or ox, or donkey, or any of your neighbour's possessions* (see Exodus 20:1-21; Deuteronomy 5:6-22). The Israelites were expected to keep all the commandments of God. Unfortunately, when Moses the leader of the Israelites was a long time on the mountain with God, the Israelites turned to idolatry saying to Aaron the High Priests: *Get to work, make us a god to go at our head; for that Moses, the man who brought us here from Egypt – we do not know what has become of him* (Exodus 32:1). Indeed, they created a calf and they sacrificed burnt offerings and brought communion sacrifices to the god (see Exodus 32:2-6). Of course, this was against the commandment of God and God wanted to destroy them saying to Moses: *I know these people; I know how obstinate they are! So leave me now, so that my anger can blaze at them and I can put an end to them! I shall make a great nation out of you instead* (Exodus 32:9-10). Moses was convinced about the sin of the people of Israel and he said to the people: *You have committed a great sin. But now I shall go up to the Lord: perhaps I can secure expiation for your sin* (Exodus 32:30). Indeed, Moses prayed for the people that sinned by creating a god. However, God withdrew his plan for their destruction but still punished the people for the sin they committed by making the calf as a god.

Warning by God against committing sins

18. God continued to warn the Israelites against sins. God said to Moses: *If anyone sins inadvertently against any of the Lord's commandments and does anything prohibited by them, if the one who sins is the anointed priest, thus making the people guilty, then for the sin which he has committed he must offer the Lord a young bull, an unblemished animal from the herd, a sacrifice for sin* (Leviticus 4:2-3). God really warned people about sinning. In fact, people who sinned would have serious penalties from God. Many of the Israelites really sinned against God. For example, God asked Moses to send a group of people to the land of Canaan to reconnoiter the place. Twelve people were sent and they went and saw the land of Canaan and the people there. When they came back, they gave their report. However, ten of them were not agreeing to the takeover of the place while two of them Joshua and Caleb insisted on what God wanted them to do. Caleb said: *We must march in immediately and take it; we are certainly able to conquer them* (Numbers 13:30). Unfortunately, the whole community rejected going to the land of Canaan and were saying: *Would to God we had died in Egypt, or even that we had died in the desert! Why has the Lord brought us to this country, for us to perish by the sword and our wives and children to be seized as booty? Should we not do better to go back to Egypt? ... Let us appoint a leader and go back to Egypt.* They were indeed rebellious against God and God said: *How much longer will these people treat me with contempt? How much longer will they refuse to trust me, in spite of all the signs I have displayed among them? I shall strike them with pestilence and disown them.* And God promised Moses: *And of you I shall make a new nation, greater and mightier than they* (see Numbers 14:1-12). These Israelites really sinned against God.

Some sinners among the Israelites

19. There were again people among the Israelites who sinned. These were Korah, Kohath, Dathan and Abiram with two hundred and fifty Israelites who were leaders of the community. They were attacking Moses and Aaron who were leaders of Israel. God was annoyed by what these people were doing and said to Moses and Aaron: *Get away from this community; I am going to destroy them*

here and now. The community said: O God, God of the spirits that gave life to every living thing, will you be angry with the whole community because one man sinned. Moses did his best to separate the sinners from others in the community saying: Stay away, I tell you, from the tents of these sinners, and touch nothing that belongs to them, for fear that with all their sins you too will be swept away. Indeed, after this, the sinners were destroyed showing that those who sinned deserve such destruction (see Numbers 16:1-35).

Moses once did what was displeasing to God

20. Again we can see that people should not do anything against the way of God. Even Moses, the leader of Israelites once did what was displeasing to God. The people were complaining about lack of water and God told Moses to get the community together and order the rock to release water for the people. Moses did that but in a way of unbelief saying: *Listen now, you rebels. Shall we make water gush from this rock for you? Moses then raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the branch; water gushed out in abundance, and the community and their live stock drank. God was angry with Moses and punished Moses and Aaron: Because you did not believe that I could assert my holiness before the Israelites' eyes, you will not lead this assembly into the country which I am giving them (see Numbers 20:1-13). God told Moses that he would die and be gathered to his people and God said: Because, with other Israelites, you broke faith with me at the Waters of Meribah-Kadesh in the desert of Zin, because you did not make my holiness clear to the Israelites; you may only see the country from outside; you cannot enter it - the country which I am giving to the Israelites (see Deuteronomy 32:48-52).*

Some Israelites who did evil

21. Some Israelites still did evil. Some joined in the prostitution with women and the worship of idols. The report can be seen as it was given in Numbers 25: *The people gave themselves over to prostitution with Moabite women. These invited them to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down before their gods. The sin was in the Baal of Peor. God ordered the killing of the people*

who did the evil and Moses ordered the judges of Israel saying: *Each of you will put to death those of his people who have committed themselves to the Baal of Peor.* Even an Israelite brought a Midianite woman into his family and the priest Phinehas had to deal with them. It was said: *The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, on seeing this, stood up, left the assembly, seized a lance, followed the Israelite into the alcove, and there ran them both through, the Israelite and the woman, through the stomach. Thus the plague which had struck the Israelites were arrested. In the plague twenty-four thousand of them had died.* God really appreciated what the priest Phinehas did (see Numbers 25:1-15). In Deuteronomy, we see what happened with Israelites who followed Midianites to worship Baal of Peor: *You can see for yourselves what the Lord has done about the Baal of Peor; The Lord your God has destroyed all those of you who followed the Baal of Peor; but those of you who stayed faithful to the Lord your God are alive today. Look: as the Lord my God commanded me, I have taught you laws and customs, for you to observe in the country of which you are going to take possession* (see Deuteronomy 4:3-8). Indeed, those who were worshipping gods were really sinners who were not pure before God.

Achan did evil

22. Indeed, many Israelites in the Old Testament did not have the purity to God. We will still mention a few people who had no purity of heart for God because of their sinfulness. God said to Joshua: *Stand up! Why are you lying prostrate like this? Israel has sinned; they have violated the covenant which I imposed on them. They have gone so far as to take what was under the curse of destruction, they have even stolen it; they have actually hidden it; they have put it in their baggage.* Joshua summoned the clans and found that the person who did what was evil as said by God was Achan. When Joshua spoke to him, Achan replied: *Yes, I am the man who has sinned against the Lord, God of Israel, and this is what I have done. In the loot, I saw a fine robe from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and an ingot of gold weighing fifty shekels, I set my heart on them and I took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.* The Israelites stoned Achan to death for his sin (see Joshua 7:10-26). It was evident that many

of the Israelites did what was displeasing to God and were thus not clean before God. As we see in Judges, Israelites did evil: *The Israelites then did what is evil in the Lord's eyes and served Baals. They deserted the Lord, God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt, and they followed other gods, from those of the surrounding peoples.... They prostituted themselves to other gods and bowed down before these. ... They followed other gods, they served them and bowed before them and would not give up the practices and stubborn ways of their ancestors at all.* Of course, God punished them but they continued to do evil by following the gods (see Judges 2:1-23; 3:1-11).

Sons of Eli the Priest were committing sin and were killed

Some people who were committing sins in the Old Testament had the punishment from God. We can see the sons of Eli the priest. The sons of Eli were Hophni and Phinehas. It was said about them: *Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels; they cared nothing for the Lord nor for what was due to the priests from the people* (1 Samuel 2:12-13). A man of God said what God would do to the sinful sons of Eli: *What happens to your two sons Hophni and Phinehas will be a sign for you on the same day both will die* (1 Samuel 2:34). The Philistines fought against the Hebrews and defeated them and captured the ark of God and Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli died (see 1 Samuel 4:10-11).

King Saul did what was evil before God

23. Another person who offended God was Saul. Saul who was king of Israel did what was contrary to what God had said. Not seeing Samuel the prophet of God, he did what Samuel should do. It was presenting burnt offering. He called for the burnt offering and the communion sacrifice and he presented the burnt offering. Samuel came and asked him what he had been doing. Saul replied: *I saw the army deserting me and dispersing, and you had not come at the time fixed, while the Philistines were mustering at Michmash. So I thought: Now the Philistines are going to fall on me at Gilgal and I have not implored the favour of God. So I felt obliged to make the burnt offering myself.* Samuel told him that he acted like a fool contrary to the way of the Lord and the Lord would disown him (see 1 Samuel

13:8-13). Even God rejected Saul saying: *I regret having made Saul king, since he has broken his allegiance to me and not carried out my orders* (1 Samuel 15:10-11). Saul tried several times to kill David but did not succeed in doing that and David did not kill him even when he had the possibility of killing Saul who came to attack him (see Samuel 19:10, 20; 23:19-28; 24:1-8; 26:1-23). Saul had lost the purity to God and God did reject him as God said: *I regret having made Saul king, since he has broken his allegiance to me and not carried out orders* (1 Samuel 15:10-11). Philipines killed his son Jonathan and when he himself was wounded, he wanted his servant to kill him but the man refused and Saul killed himself (see Samuel 31:1-4).

King Solomon did good things but ended up with evil

24. Another person who did evil was Solomon, the son of David. He was the king of Israel after King David his father. He did a lot of good things in Israel. He built the temple for God (see 1 Kings 6:1-14). He prayed in a special way to the Lord and for the people (see 1 Kings 8:22-61). However, he did also what was displeasing to God. He married many foreign women who were worshipping false gods against what God said: *You are not to go among them nor they among you, or they will be sure to sway your hearts to their own gods* (1 Kings 11:2). Solomon had seven hundred wives of royal rank and three hundred concubines. Unfortunately, Solomon joined his wives in worshipping gods as it was said: *When Solomon grew old his wives swayed his heart to other gods, and his heart was not wholly with the Lord his God as his father David's had been. Solomon became a follower of Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, and of Milcom, the Ammonite abomination. He did what was displeasing to the Lord, and was not a wholehearted follower of the Lord, as his father David had been* (1 Kings 11:4-6). That was why he was condemned as it was said: *You abandoned your body to women, you became the slave of your appetites. You stained your honour, you profaned your stock, so bringing retribution on your children and affliction for your folly; the empire split in two, from Ephraim arose a rebel kingdom* (Ecclesiasticus 47:19-21). Solomon ended up in sinfulness.

King Ahab and his wife were doing evil

25. There were still many people who were sinful and thereby without purity of heart. One of the evil people in Israel was Ahab, who was a king of Israel. Ahab met Elijah a holy man and said: *So there you are, you scourge of Israel!* And Elijah replied: *Not I, I am not the scourge of Israel, you and your family are; because you have deserted the Lord and followed Baal. Now give orders for all Israel to gather round me on Mount Carmel, and also the four hundred prophets of Baal who eat at Jezebel's table* (1Kings 18:16-19). Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, were really sinning by joining the prophets of Baal. Elijah did a lot to show the fault of the prophets of Baal and slaughtered the four hundred prophets of Baal. When Ahab told Jezebel what Elijah did to the prophets of Baal, Jezebel said to Elijah: *May the gods bring unnameable ills on me and worse ills too, if by this time tomorrow I have not made your life like one of theirs*(1 Kings 19:2). When Ahab wanted the land owned by Naboth and Naboth refused to give the land to him, he lay down on his bed and refused to eat and his wife Jezebel arranged for the murder of Naboth. Jezebel wrote a letter to the elders and notables of the city where Naboth lived instructing them: *Proclaim a fast, and put Naboth in a prominent place among the people. There confront him with a couple of scoundrels who will accuse him as follows, "You have cursed God and the king." Then take him outside and stone him to death.* They did what Jezebel told them and killed Naboth and when Ahab saw that Naboth was dead, he got up and took possession of the land of Naboth (see 1 Kings 21:1-16). The result was that the Lord sent Elijah to say to Ahab: *You have committed murder and now you usurp as well. For this – and the Lord says this – in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick your blood too* (1 King 19). Even though Ahab repented, he still had suffered as the Lord decided. He was killed in the fight with king of Aram (see 1 Kings 22:29-38).

Other people who were worshipping the idol Baal

26. There were other persons who did evil by worshipping Baal. The son of Ahab, Ahaziah, who replaced Ahab as the King of Israel did what was displeasing to God as it was said: *He served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked the angel of the Lord God of Israel just as his father had done* (1 Kings 22:52-54). Another son of King Ahab, King Jehoram, did evil again as reported: *He did what is displeasing to*

*the Lord, though not like his father and mother, for he did away with the pillar to Baal which his father made. Nonetheless, he continued to practice the sins into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel and did not give them up (see 2 Kings 1-3). Manasseh, a king in Jerusalem displeased God by worshipping Baal: He rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed, he set up altars to Baal and made a sacred pole as Ahab king of Israel had done, he worshipped the whole array of heaven and served it (see 2 Kings 21:1-3). All the people who were reported to have been worshipping idols were really sinners who were enemies of God. There were many of them in the Old Testament. The Lord was angry about their sins and this was the result: *When that day comes, a fountain will be opened for the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to wash sin and impurity away. And the Lord declared: When that day comes, I shall cut off the names of the idols from the country, and they will never be remembered again; I shall also rid the country of the prophets, and of the spirit of impurity (see Zechariah 13:1-2).* Indeed, the Lord was really angry in the Old Testament about people who were sinners, especially those who were worshipping idols. Christians should not imitate such people who were sinners and who were disobeying God.*

Let us make sure that we do not imitate sinners

We have seen some people in the Old Testament who were sinners. There are many of them in the Bible. They were committing various sins against God. As we see, they were not respecting the commandments of God. God did punish most of them. As Christians, we should not act like these people who were committing sins. We shall see also those who were sinners in the New Testament. We should always imitate Jesus Christ and holy people. We will also see people who were holy in the Old Testament and New Testament. Those people were pure in heart and did see God. We should make sure that we imitate those who were holy so that we will also be holy and pure in heart and see God through eternal life.

CHAPTER TWO

PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WITH PURITY IN HEART

CREATE IN ME A PURE HEART, O GOD, AND RENEW A STEADFAST SPIRIT WITHIN ME (PSALM 51:10)

The people in the Old Testament who had good image for God

27. Generally, the Old Testament had people who offended God by committing various sins. However, some people in the Old Testament had good image for God. The Psalmist showed the value of purity saying: *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god* (Psalm 24:1-4). While many people were committing sins, some people in the Old Testament still showed their love for God. The Psalmist also said: *How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word* (Psalm 119:9).

Noah the good man

28. We begin with one man who really lived according to the word of God. This man was Noah. It was said about him: *Noah was a good man, an upright man among his contemporaries, and he walked with God* (Genesis 6:9). As we can see in Genesis, God said to Noah: *I have decided that the end has come for all living things, for the earth is full of lawlessness because of human beings. So I am about to destroy them and the earth. Make yourself an ark out of resinous wood ... Noah did this; exactly as God commanded him, he did* (see Genesis 6:13-22). After God had destroyed the people with serious flood, he blessed Noah who was saved with his family and animals in the ark and said: *I am now establishing my covenant with you and with your descendants to come, and with every living creature that was with you... And I shall maintain my covenant with you; that never again shall all living things be destroyed by the waters of a flood, nor shall there ever again be a flood to devastate the earth* (Genesis 9:8-11). Noah had

shown how human beings should behave before God in order to have the purity to God.

Abram later Abraham and his wife Sarai later Sarah

29. Another person who showed good reaction to God in the Old Testament was Abram who later became Abraham. Abram obeyed God even though he did not know all that the Lord was ordering him. God said to him: *Leave your country, your kindred and your father's house for a country which I shall show you, and I shall make you a great nation. I shall bless you and make your name famous; you are to be a blessing!* (Genesis 12:1-2). Abram later named Abraham did what God told him. He went to the places which God told him to go. Abraham and his wife, Sarai later named Sarah, really kept the commandments of God. He obeyed God. He and his wife had only a son Isaac and God put Abraham to the test by telling him to kill his only son in sacrifice: *Take your son, your only son, your beloved Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, where you are to offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I shall point out to you* (Genesis 22:1-2). Abraham took his only son to do what the Lord told him. They were going for burnt offering with wood, fire and knife. On the way, Isaac asked him: *Look, here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?* Abraham replied, *My son, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering* (see Genesis 22:6-8).

Abraham the good servant of God

30. Of course, Abraham was prepared to obey God by using his son for the burnt offering. When he was doing as God commanded by taking a knife to kill his son, the angel of God called him from heaven and told him not to kill his son saying: *Do not raise your hand against the boy, the angel said. Do not harm him, for now I know you fear God. You have not refused me your own beloved son* (see Genesis 22:9-12). Abraham saw a ram and offered it for burnt offering. The angel of God blessed him for his obedience to God: *I swear by my own self, the Lord declares, that because you have done this, because you have not refused me your beloved son, I will shower blessings on you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants will*

gain possession of the gates of their enemies. All nations on earth will bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed my command (see Genesis 22:15-18). Indeed, Abraham had purity with God. His son, Isaac was also good in the way of God. So also was Jacob, the son of Isaac and Joseph the son of Jacob.

Moses the good servant of God

31. Among the Israelites who were brought out from Egypt by God, there were some of them who showed their truth to God. Moses really did a lot in obedience to God except for the one matter already said. He did well to obey God who sent him to go to Pharaoh, the King of Egypt even though he was not clear about it. That was why God and Moses settled God's mind. God said: *Yes indeed, the Israelites' cry for help has reached me, and I have also seen the cruel way in which the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now I am sending you to Pharaoh, for you to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt* (Exodus 3:9-10). Moses said to God: *Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?* And God assured him that he would help him to do it (see Exodus 3:11-12). Moses did obey God and eventually brought the Israelites out of Egypt and guided them to thank God. Moses and the Israelites after they came out of Egypt and saw how God destroyed the Egyptians who wanted to kill them, they sang a beautiful song in honour of God (see Exodus 15:1-18). Even God invited him to come to the mountain to collect the stone tablets – the law and the commandment. Moses obeyed and went up the mountain and stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights (see Exodus 24:12-18). Moses generally followed the laws and commandments of God and did a lot to guide the Israelites even though he once did what was wrong for which God stopped him to go with the Israelites to the land of Canaan which God gave them.

Two obedient men –Joshua and Caleb

32. Two persons did what God wanted. Those were two of the twelve men who were sent by Moses following the order of God for them to reconnoitre the land of Canaan which God was giving to Israelites. They went and came back and reported what they saw. This was the report they made to Moses: *We made our*

way into the country where you sent us. It does indeed flow with milk and honey; here is what it produces. At the same time, its inhabitants are a powerful people; the towns are fortified and very big; yes, and we saw the Anakim there. The Amalekites occupy the Negeb area, the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites the highlands, and the Canaanites the sea coast and the banks of the Jordan (Numbers 13:27-29). After their report, Caleb, one of the twelve, said: *We must march in immediately and take it; we are certainly able to conquer it.* Ten of them opposed him and the Israelite community was angry and wanted to return to Egypt. Joshua and Caleb who had gone with them to Canaan, tore their clothes and begged the Israelites not to rebel against God (see Numbers 14:5-9). While God decided to deal with the ten persons who were sent with Joshua and Caleb to the land of Canaan, God said: *I swear none of you will enter the country where I swore most solemnly to settle you, except Caleb son of Jephunneh, and Joshua son of Nun* (Numbers 14:30). That was how the ten men who were not obedient to God died in the desert but the two of the twelve men, Joshua and Caleb, who were obedient and respectful to God remained alive to go to the country of Canaan. Indeed, Joshua was commissioned to replace Moses to lead the Israelites to the country which God promised them. Moses said to Joshua: *Be strong, stand firm; you will be the one to go with this people into the country which the Lord has sworn to their ancestors that he would give them; you are to be the one who puts them into possession of it. The Lord himself will lead you; he will be with you; he will not fail you or desert you. Have no fear, do not be alarmed* (Deuteronomy 31:7-8).

Joshua carried on his love for God

33. Indeed, Joshua showed his love for God and obeyed God always. After the death of Moses, God spoke to Joshua saying: *Moses my servant is dead; go now and cross this Jordan, you and this whole people, into the country which I am giving to them. Every place you tread with the soles of your feet I shall give you, as I declared to Moses that I would* (Joshua 1:1-3). He led the Israelites to capture and take over the country of Canaan and after many years he said to Israelites: *I myself am old, far advanced in years; you for your part have witnessed all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; the Lord your God*

himself has fought for you. Look, these nations still remaining, and all the nations which I have exterminated from Jordan all the way to the Great Sea in the west. I have allotted to you as the heritage for your tribes. The Lord your God will himself drive them out before you; he will dispossess them before you and you will take possession of their country, as the Lord your God has promised (Joshua 23:2-5). Joshua was really faithful to God. That was why Joshua said to the people: *So now, fear the Lord and serve him truly and sincerely; banish the gods whom your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord (Joshua 24:14).* He also told the people: *You will not be able to serve the Lord, since he is a holy God, he is a jealous God who will not tolerate either your misdeeds or your sins. If you desert the Lord and serve the foreigners' gods, he will turn and maltreat you anew and in spite of having been good to you in the past, will destroy you ... The Lord our God is the one whom we shall serve; his voice we shall obey! (Joshua 24:19-20, 24).* Joshua really served God and demanded from the people to always serve God. By doing the way he did, he had purity of heart.

Samuel a very good servant of God

34. There was another good person who was serving God. He was Samuel. As we see in 1 Samuel, the boy Samuel was serving the Lord in the presence of Eli and he was lying in the Lord's sanctuary. The Lord called him and Eli instructed him to say to the Lord: *Speak, Lord; for your servant is listening* and when the Lord then came and called him, Samuel said what Eli told him to say (see 1 Samuel 3:1-10). Samuel was pleasing to God and we can see that God was with him and did not let a single word fall to the ground of all that he had told him (see 1 Samuel 3:19). Samuel was following the Lord and helping others to obey God. When the people had troubles they asked Samuel to pray for them: *Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, to save us from death, for to all our sins we have added this wrong of asking for a king*, and Samuel said to them: *Do not be afraid. Although you have done all these wicked things, do not withdraw your allegiance from the Lord. Instead, serve the Lord with all your heart. Do not transfer your allegiance to useless idols which, being useless, are futile and cannot save anybody* (see 1 Samuel 12:19-21). Samuel remained ever faithful to God. Saul who became the king of Israel was not doing well before God and God said to Samuel: *I regret*

having made Saul king, since he has broken his allegiance to me and not carried out my orders and Samuel was pained and cried to the Lord all night long (see 1 Samuel 15:10-11). He did a lot to convert Saul to God but Saul did not show his repentance even though he was claiming that he did obey the Lord. Samuel said Saul the king: *Since you have rejected the Lord's word, he has rejected you as king* (see 1 Samuel 15:16-23). Indeed, Samuel was mourning over Saul the king and God said to him: *How much longer do you mean to go on mourning over Saul, now that I myself have rejected him as ruler of Israel* (see 1 Samuel 16:1). Samuel kept on obeying God and did whatever God wanted him to do. He was really holy and pure in heart to God.

Gideon a faithful person obeying God

35. Gideon who was also called Jerubbaal was a person who obeyed God and did a lot as God wanted him to do. It was at the time when Midian brought Israel to a great distress and Israelites were crying to the Lord. God sent an angel to Gideon and the angel told Gideon that the Lord was with him. He was not clear about the matter but after some activities, Gideon recognized the angel of the Lord and he said: *Alas, my Lord God! Now I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face.* He started doing what the Lord wanted him to do. He built an altar to the Lord. He destroyed the altar of Baal belonging to his father and people who had wanted to kill him for destroying the altar of Baal but his father Joash said to the people who wanted to kill his son: *Is it your job to plead for Baal? Is it your job to champion his cause? Anyone who pleads for Baal must be put to death before dawn. If he is a god, let him plead for himself, now that Gideon has destroyed his altar.* And the people left off killing Gideon and named him Jerubbaal because *they said, Baal must plead against him, because he has destroyed his altar* (see Judges 6:7-32). Gideon also obeyed God in working against the Midianites. He went with over thirty two thousand persons to fight the Midianites but the Lord said that they were too many. God asked Gideon to ask those who were afraid to go away and when he did as God said, twenty-two thousand of the people went away with ten thousand still with him. God told him that the people were still too many and told him what to do to keep away most of them. He did as the Lord told him and only three hundred persons remained and Gideon used the three hundred people

to defeat the Midianites as God said (see Judges 7:1-22). Gideon kept on obeying God. Even when people wanted him and his son and his grandson to rule over them, Gideon said to them: *I will not rule you, neither will my son. The Lord shall rule you* (see Judges 8:22-23). Even though Gideon had many wives and seventy sons, he was obeying God before he died after a happy old age (see Judges 8:29-32).

David doing well in Israel

36. Another person who was obeying God was David. Samuel ordered by God went to the family of Jesse to seek for someone who would be a king to replace Saul. The spirit of the Lord seized on David. Even though Saul was trying to kill David for he saw that David had been anointed by Samuel to be a king, David spared Saul whom he and his people could have killed in a cave. When Saul left the cave David said to him: *Why do you listen to people who say, "David intends your ruin"?* This very day you have seen for yourself how the Lord put you in my power in the cave and how, refusing to kill you, I spared you saying, "I will not raise my hand against my lord, since he is the Lord's anointed. Saul told him that he, David was upright and he himself, Saul was not since he behaved well to him whereas he, Saul behaved badly to David (see 1 Samuel 24:1-23). Again when they found Saul and his army sleeping and one man with David asked David to kill Saul, David said, *Do not kill him, for who could raise his hand against the Lord's anointed and go unpunished?* When Saul knew that David could have killed him but did not he said: *May you be blessed, my son David! In what you undertake, you will certainly succeed* (see 1 Samuel 26:1-25). After the death of Saul, David consulted God about where he should go and God told him to go to Hebron. There David was anointed as king of Judah (see 2 Samuel 2:1-4). Later he was anointed the king of Israel (see 2 Samuel 5:1-5). David as the king of Israel did a lot of good works. He even wanted to build a temple for God as he said to Nathan: *Look, I am living in a cedar-wood palace, while the ark of God is under awnings.* Nathan told him to go ahead and what he wanted to do but God did not want him to build the temple for him but said that it should be built by the son of David who would be his heir (see 2 Samuel 7:1-17).

King David sinned but repented and did well as the King of Israel

37. Unfortunately, David sinned. But he repented. Even though David sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite, and arranged the death of Uriah at the battle, God sent Nathan to show David that he had sinned and David said: *I have sinned against God* and Nathan said to him: *The Lord, for his part, forgives your sin; you are not to die. But, since you have outraged the Lord by doing this, the child born to you will die.* Of course the child born by Bathsheba by the adultery with David died and David said: *Who knows? Perhaps the Lord will take pity on me and the child will live. But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he cannot come back* (see 2 Samuel 12:1-25). Even though David sinned, he repented and did his best for God. He said a lot of wonderful words in praising God: *The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer is my God. I take refuge in him, my rock, my shield, my saving strength, my stronghold, my place of refuge. My Saviour, you have saved me from violence; I call to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my foes ...*(see 2 Samuel 22, 23:1-7). Indeed, David ended up as one clean to God. Indeed, David blessed the Lord saying: *May you be blessed, Lord, God of Israel our ancestor, for ever and for ever! Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the splendor, length of days and glory, everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours is the sovereignty, Lord; you are exalted, supreme over all ... So now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your majestic name...* (see 1 Chronicles 29:10-19). David showed his purity to God by his prayer to God.

Elijah a good man of God in Israel

38. There were some other people who were faithful to God in the Old Testament. We have Elijah and Elisha who were faithful to God. Elijah said to Ahab, a king of Israel who was generally evil: *By the life of the Lord, God of Israel, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain these coming years unless I give the word* (1Kings 17:1). He was continuously faithful to God and was always doing what God wanted. When God told him to go to Zarephath in Sidonia, he went and was hungry. He asked a widow to give him water to drink and a scrap of bread to eat. The widow who wanted to bring him water told him that she had

no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug which she would prepare for herself and her son and then they would die. Elijah said to her: *Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and your son. For the Lord God of Israel, says: Jar of meal shall not be spent, jug of oil shall not be emptied, before the day when the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth* (see 1 Kings 17:7-14).

Elijah obeying God

39. Elijah continued to obey God. Even when God told him to go to Ahab, the king who was evil, even killing people, Elijah told somebody who was afraid of Ahab, his master: *Go and tell your master; Elijah is here* and the man said: *Why, he will kill me!* Elijah replied: *As the Lord Sabaoth lives, whom I serve, I shall present myself to him today* (see 1 Kings 18:2-15). Elijah met Ahab who was deserting the Lord and said to him: *I am not the scourge of Israel, you and your family are; because you have deserted the Lord and followed Baal. Now give orders for all Israel to gather round on Mount Carmel, and also the four hundred prophets of Baal who eat at Jezebel's table* (see 1 Kings 18:16-19). Elijah did a lot for God. He got the four hundred prophets of Baal and wanted them to do their own sacrifice to Baal while he would do his own sacrifice to God. They tried to do the sacrifice but could not while Elijah did his own successfully and all the people there said: *The Lord is God*. Elijah told the people to seize and kill the four hundred prophets of Baal (see 1 Kings 18:20-40). Elijah got Elisha who joined him and the Lord took Elijah up to heaven (see 2 Kings 2:1-11).

Elisha the lover of God

40. Elisha who followed Elijah showed his love for God. When Elijah told him that the Lord would carry him away that day Elisha said that he knew. When Elijah told him to stay away as he was being taken by God to Jericho, Elisha replied: *As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you*. He went with Elijah till Elijah was taken up to heaven and he cried: *Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?* (see 2 Kings 2:1-18). Elisha continued to follow the Lord. In the name of the Lord, Elisha did a lot of miracles. A woman who had been seeing Elisha said to her

husband about Elisha: *Look, I am sure the man who is constantly passing our way must be a holy man of God. Let us build him a small walled room, and put him a bed in it, and a table and chair and lamp; whenever he comes to us he can rest there.* They got Elisha to be staying in their house and their son died. The woman laid him on the bed which they had kept for Elisha, the man of God. The woman made her way to Elisha, the man of God at Mount Carmel. Elisha the man of God saw her and eventually followed her to the house and saw the child on the bed where he was staying and prayed to God and the dead child came back to life (see 2 Kings 4:1-37).

Elisha, the man of God

41. Elisha was always called the man of God (see 2 Kings 4:40, 42). He always followed the way of God even when there were wars. In one of the places of wars, Elisha turned to God. When his servant said to him, *Oh, my lord what are we to do?* Elisha replied: *Do not be afraid, for there are more on our side than on theirs.* Elisha prayed: *Lord, open his eyes and make him see.* The Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw the mountain covered in fiery horses and chariots surrounding Elisha. Elisha prayed to God and captured the armed band but did not kill them. When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, *Shall I kill them, father?* But Elisha replied: *Do not kill them. Do you kill your own prisoners with sword and bow? Offer them food and water, so that they can eat and drink, and then let them go back to their master.* The king did what Elisha told him and the people who had come to fight them went back to their master, the king of Aram who sent them to fight the Israelites. The result was: *Aramaean raiding parties never invaded the territory of Israel again* (see 2 Kings 6:8-23).

Elisha trusting God

42. Elisha was very faithful to God and trusted in the Lord. A king came and said: *This misery plainly comes from the Lord. Why should I still trust in the Lord?* Elisha replied: *Listen to the word of the Lord, the Lord says this, "By this time tomorrow a measure of finest flour will sell for one shekel, and two measures of barley for one shekel, at the gate of Samaria"* and the equerry on whose arm the king was leaning retorted to Elisha, *'Even if the Lord made windows in the sky, could this*

word come true? And Elisha replied: *You will see it with your own eyes though you will eat none of it* (see 2 Kings 6:32-33, 7:1-2). Elisha was really the man of God. Indeed, Ben-Hadad, king of Aram who was ill recognized Elisha as the man of God and said: *The man of God has come all the way to us... Take a present with you and go and meet the man of God; consult the Lord through him, and find out if I shall recover from my illness.* When the person he sent went to Elisha and told him, Elisha replied: *Go and tell him, "You might recover," though the Lord has shown me that he will certainly die.* The king really died (see 2 Kings 8:7-15).

The reports on people in the Book of Ecclesiasticus

43. The book of Ecclesiasticus gave the names of people who were good in the way of God and one who failed in the way of God. They are: Enoch who pleased the Lord and was transferred to heaven; Noah who was found perfectly upright; Abraham who obeyed the law of the Most High; Isaac who assured the blessing of humanity and Jacob confirmed in his blessings; Moses of blessed memory; Aaron, who was a holy man like Moses; Phinehas who was third in glory because of his zeal in the fear of the Lord; Joshua who was called on the Most High, the Mighty One waging war on behalf of the Lord; Caleb who was a follower of the Mighty One so that every Israelite might see that it is good to follow the Lord; Samuel who was the beloved of the Lord; David who in all his activities gave thanks to the Holy One Most High in words of glory and the Lord took away his sins, making him a royal covenant, and a glorious throne in Israel; Solomon who abandoned his body to women and became the slave of his appetites, stained his honour and profaned his stock and the Lord never went back on his mercy, never cancelled any of his words; Elijah the prophet who was glorious in his miracles; Elisha who in his lifetime performed wonders, and in death his works were marvelous; In the matter of Hezekiah it was said: Swiftly the Holy One heard them from heaven and delivered them by the agency of Isaiah; Hezekiah did what was pleasing to the Lord; Isaiah who was a prophet and a great man trustworthy in his vision; Josiah who took the right course of converting the people and he set his heart on the Lord and in godless times he upheld the cause of religion; Ezekiel who saw a

vision of glory which God showed to him, and Zerubbabel and Joshua who raised a sanctuary sacred to the Lord (see Ecclesiasticus 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 49).

The various prophets and writers in Old Testament

44. There are many prophets of God in the Old Testament. They followed the way of God and gave their messages which were found in the scriptural passages. We can see the following messages of the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos; Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These prophets wrote a lot of good statements about the Lord. For example, Isaiah said: *In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne; his train filled the sanctuary. Above him stood seraphs, each one with six wings; two to cover its face, two to cover its feet and two for flying; and they were shouting these words to each other: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth* (Isaiah 6:1-3). Jeremiah, for example, did what God told him to do. God told him to tell all the people in the Temple of the Lord: *The Lord says this: If you will not listen to me and follow my Law which I have given you, and pay attention to the words of my servants the prophets whom I have never tired of sending to you, although you never have paid attention, I shall treat this Temple as I treated Shiloh, and make the city a curse for all the nations of the world.* Jeremiah said what the Lord told him to say and the priests and prophets in the Temple said: *This man deserves to die, since he has prophesied against the city, as you have heard with your own ears.* Jeremiah remained faithful to God since the Lord had truly sent him to them and he was not killed as some people wanted him to be killed (see Jeremiah 26:1-24). Jeremiah was always obedient to God.

Good men –Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah

45. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were really faithful to God when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took over Judah. The four of them were handed over by Nebuchadnezzar to Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch who gave them other names. Daniel was determined not to incur pollution at all and with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah requested from chief eunuch to be free from eating the food

and drinking the wine from royal table. Indeed, God gave them knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and learning. They were presented to King Nebuchadnezzar who was not an Israelite who received them and kept them as members of the king's court (see Daniel 1:1-30). They remained faithful to God. Daniel kept doing what was faithful to God. Even when King Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden statue and wanted all to worship it, the three – Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abed-Nego), refused to worship the golden statue and King Nebuchadnezzar was told about their refusing to worship the golden statue and they were ordered to be destroyed in the burning fiery furnace. God, to whom they were faithful, saved them and King Nebuchadnezzar saw them with another person in the furnace and said to them: *Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, servants of God Most High, come out, come here!* And when they came out safely King Nebuchadnezzar said: *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego; he has sent his angel to rescue his servants who, putting their trust in him, defied the order of the king, and preferred to forfeit their bodies rather than serve or worship any god but their God...* (see Daniel 3:1-23; 24-30).

Daniel the faithful

46. Daniel was all the time faithful to God. He saw how two men who were judges wanted to commit adultery with Susanna and Susanna refused and they reported her for having committed adultery with another young man and they wanted to kill her. Daniel said: *I am innocent of this woman's death* and got the elders to try the two men. The two men who accused Susanna were tried and were convicted of false evidence out of their mouths. Susanna was saved from being killed and the two men were given the same punishment which they wanted to inflict on Susanna. The report is: *From that day onwards, Daniel's reputation stood high with the people* (see Daniel 13:1-64). Daniel really showed his faithfulness to God by doing all to please God.

The people with purity of heart

47. In general, even though many people committed sins against God in the Old Testament, there were also many people who obeyed God and did well to keep the purity of heart for God. We should imitate such people who were obeying God and keeping away from evil and sins. We will see in the New Testament people who were unclean because of their sins and people who were clean by their holiness in following Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and God.

CHAPTER THREE

PEOPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHO WERE NOT PURE IN HEART

FOR FROM THE HEART COME EVIL INTENTIONS: MURDER, ADULTERY, FORNICATION, THEFT, PERJURY, SLANDER. THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT MAKE A PERSON UNCLEAN (MATTHEW 15:19-20).

Seeing the unclean people in the New Testament

48. The New Testament is the section of the sacred scriptures in which we can see the way by which God helped to change the world. The sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Old Testament had created a lot of evil in the world. God sent His Son Jesus Christ to do all to bring people to God. In the Gospel according to Matthew, we see the coming of Jesus who was to be born by Mary whose husband was Joseph. We see this: *This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins* (see Matthew 1:18-21). This is the beginning of the New Testament. Jesus who is Christ was really the person that gave us the New Testament in which people should get the way to God. We can see in the New Testament people who were committing sins and people who followed Jesus Christ in doing the good works in the love of God.

Jesus Christ the Word of God

49. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God, was also called the Word of God. In the Gospel according to John we see him as Word: *In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God from the beginning... The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth*

(see John 1:1-2, 14). Jesus from his birth kept wonderfully doing the will of God and teaching the people what to do for the will of God. In fact, he taught a lot about what should give people blessedness and salvation. The Gospel of Matthew said: *Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and his teaching made a deep impression on the people because he taught them with authority, unlike their own scribes* (see Matthew 5-7). He showed that he was keeping the commandments of the Father. While asking people to keep his own commandments he showed that he was keeping the commandments of God, His Father: *If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love* (John 15:10). He showed that he was united with His Father as he prayed: *Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; so that, just as you have given him power over all humanity, he may give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you sent. I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do* (John 17:1-3).

People opposing Jesus Christ

50. While Jesus Christ was doing all he was doing according to the directives of God the Father, many people were doing things which were not according to the will of God the Father. Indeed, many people in Israel were opposing the goodness of Jesus Christ. There were many sinners. Jesus who called Matthew who was one of the tax collectors who were regarded as sinners, ate with a number of tax collectors and sinners and the Pharisees said to his disciples: *Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?* And Jesus replied: *It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. Go and learn the meaning of the words: Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice. And indeed I came to call not the upright, but sinners* (see Matthew 9:10-13). Indeed, Jesus Christ was really doing everything in order to bring sinners out of sin. However, many of the Pharisees were not following the way of Jesus Christ. They were accusing him when he did miracles. For example, when Jesus cured a blind and dumb demoniac, the Pharisees said: *The man drives out devils only through Beelzebul, the chief of the devils* and Jesus replied: *Every kingdom divided against itself is heading for ruin; and no town, no*

household divided against itself can last. Now if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; so how can his kingdom last? And if it through Beelzebul that I drive devils out, through whom do your own experts drive them out. They shall be your judges, then. But if it is through the Spirit of God that I drive out devils, then be sure that the kingdom of God has caught you unawares (see Matthew 12:22-28; Mark 3:23-30 and Luke 11:17-23). Most of the Pharisees were really sinners by opposing Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God.

King Herod the evil one

51. We can see a person who was evil. The person is Herod the tetrarch who did evil to John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a very holy man of God but he arrested John the Baptist and put him in prison because he had told Herod that he, Herod, should not have married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. He had wanted to kill John the Baptist but was afraid of the people. However, when he was having a party and his daughter and daughter of Herodias danced wonderfully before the community, Herod told her to ask for anything from him and the girl went to her mother Herodias who told her to ask Herod for the head of John the Baptist. She did and Herod sent somebody to go and kill John the Baptist. John the Baptist was killed and his head was given to the girl who took it to her mother Herodias. Indeed, Herod and Herodias were really evil people and surely would not have the purity of heart for God.

Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, but an evil one

52. One of the disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ, Judas Iscariot was really an evil person. Even though he was a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ he was a sinner. He was seen as a thief. It was said in John 13:2 that the devil had already put into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon to betray Jesus (see also John 13:27). In a place where Mary, the sister of Martha brought in a pound of very costly ointment with which she anointed the feet of Jesus, Judas Iscariot said: *Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?* The report was serious: *He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself to the contents (see John 12:1-6).* As a thief, he wanted to betray

Jesus Christ. Indeed Jesus Christ knew that Judas Iscariot was evil. He was really the person whom Jesus called a devil: *Did I not choose the Twelve of you? Yet one of you is a devil. He meant Judas son of Simon Iscariot, since this was the man, one of the Twelve, who was to betray him* (John 6:70-71). Judas Iscariot would betray Jesus and as they were eating Jesus said: *But look, here with me on the table is the hand of the man who is betraying me. The Son of man is indeed on the path which was decreed, but alas for the man by whom he is betrayed* (see Luke 22:21-23; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:17-21 and John 13:21-30). Jesus did not mention the name of the person who was to betray him but he knew that the person was Judas Iscariot. When the most of the apostles said each: *Not me, Lord, surely? He answered, Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with me will betray me. The Son of man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will, but alas for the man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born!* When Judas Iscariot asked Jesus denying, Jesus said to him: *It is you who say it* (Matthew 26:20-25; Mark 14:17-21; Luke 22:14,21-23 and John 13:21-30).

Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus and later hanged himself

53. Judas Iscariot really went to the Israelites and demanded from the chief priests saying: *What are you prepared to give me if I hand him over to you? They paid him thirty silver pieces* (see Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11 and Luke 22:3-6). Later he brought a large number of people with swords and clubs sent by the chief priests and elders and they captured Jesus (see Matthew 26:47-50; Mark 14:43-50; Luke 22:47-53 and John 18:2-11). When Judas Iscariot saw that Jesus Christ was condemned, he was filled with remorse and sent back the thirty silver pieces to the chief priests and elders saying, *I have sinned. I have betrayed innocent blood* and the chief priests and elders replied: *What is that to us? That is your concern.* He dropped the money to them and went and hanged himself (see Matthew 27:3-10). In fact, Judas Iscariot who was an apostle of Jesus was a sinner and had no purity of heart.

Chief priests and elders in Israel opposing Jesus Christ

54. The chief priests and elders of Israel were really sinful also. They betrayed Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God. They took him to Pilate and insisted that he should be crucified. Even when Pilate wanted to release Jesus Christ they preferred the release of Barabbas who was a notorious prisoner. Pilate released Barabbas and eventually agreed to order the people to crucify Jesus Christ as the chief priests and elders had wanted saying: *Let him be crucified!* Jesus Christ was crucified and the people were mocking him. We see in the gospel: *The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way with the words, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He has put his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say, I am God's son (see Matthew 27:39-44; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35-37, 39-43).* Of course these people were sinners. There were two persons crucified with Jesus. They were criminals. One of them was insulting Jesus saying: *Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well.* However, the other criminal crucified with Jesus said to the other: *Have you no fear of God at all? You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it; we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom'.* And Jesus said to him: *"In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise"* (see Luke 23:39-43; Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32b). The chief priests and elders insisted on the crucifixion of Jesus and two of the criminals crucified with Jesus were sinners. While one of the criminals really repented, the other criminal remained sinful. For those who crucified him Jesus said: *"Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing"* (see Luke 23:33-34).

Chief priests and elders of Israel opposing the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ

55. In the Acts of the Apostles we can see the people who were doing evil. The chief priests, elders and some other Jews who had brought about the crucifixion of Jesus continued to oppose those who were the apostles and disciples of Jesus. When St. Peter and St. John did the miracle of curing a lame man and went on to address the people, they were arrested and kept in prison by those Jews. The

next day the rulers, elders and scribes held a meeting against Peter and John and warned them to make no statements or teachings in the name of Jesus. Peter and John said to them: *You must judge whether in God's eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God. We cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard.* The court and the people still continued to threaten them (see Acts 3-4). The apostles were later arrested by the high priest and put in prison. However, God through his angel opened the prison gates and told the apostles to go to the Temple and preach. They did. When the high priest came to Sanhedrin and the apostles were brought from the Temple, the high priest said: *We gave you a strong warning not to preach in this name, and what have you done? You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and seem determined to fix the guilt for this man's death on us.* And Peter and the apostles said: *Obedience to God comes before obedience to men; it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus, whom you executed by hanging on a tree. By his own right hand God has now raised him up to be leader and Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins through him to Israel. We are witnesses to this, we and the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.* By the help of Gamaliel, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, the apostles were flogged and released and warned not to speak in the name of Jesus (see Acts 5:12-41).

Two liars, Ananias and his wife Sapphira

56. Two persons were sinful and died. They were Ananias and his wife, Sapphira. They did evil by telling lies. They had sold their property and kept some money for themselves and gave some to the apostles saying that they gave all. Peter said to Ananias, *Ananias, how can Satan have so possessed you that you should lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land? While you still owned the land, wasn't it yours to keep, and after you had sold it wasn't the money yours to do with as you liked? What put this scheme into your mind? You have been lying not to men, but to God.* After this the man died. When the wife came and told the lies again, Peter said to her: *Why did you and your husband agree to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Listen! At the door are the footsteps of those who have buried your husband; they will carry you out, too.* The woman died immediately. Their telling lies caused their death (see Acts 5:1-11).

The people who arrested and killed Stephen

57. Again the chief priests and elders of Israel arrested Stephen, one of the seven people selected to help the apostles in talking care of people's needs. Certain people who came to debate with Stephen saw that they could not stand up against him and they arranged and arrested him. Stephen made a big preaching to them and said: *Look! I can see heaven thrown open and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.* All those people shouted and stopped their ears with their hands and stoned Stephen who was really holy, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. Stephen prayed for them saying before he died: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and Lord, do not hold this sin against them* (see Acts 6:8-15, 7:1-60). In fact, these people who arrested and stoned Stephen were really sinners. As we see, one of their supports, Saul who later became Paul was converted by Jesus Christ who said to him as he was going to Damascus to arrest followers of Jesus: *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* We shall later see the conversion of Saul. We see that the people were really sinners, persecuting the disciples of Jesus Christ and had no purity in their hearts for God. There were some others who were evil by persecuting Christians. We can see King Herod who was persecuting certain members of the church. He beheaded James the brother of John and arrested Peter and he, King Herod was making a speech and people said: *It is a god speaking, not a man!* And the angel of the Lord struck him down and he died (see Acts 12:1-23). In Asia, there was also a slave-girl who was a soothsayer and was making a lot of money for her masters. She was following Paul and saying: *Here are the servants of the Most High God; they have come to tell you to be saved.* Paul was exasperated by what the girl was doing and saying and said to the spirit controlling the girl: *I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to leave that woman.* And the spirit went out of her and her husband seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before authorities and took them to magistrates who later released them (see Acts 16:16-40).

Warnings against people committing sins

58. In fact, there were many people in the New Testament who were sinners and therefore could not have purity of heart for God. St. Paul warned such people

saying: *Do you not realize that people who do evil will never inherit the kingdom of God? Make no mistake - the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the self-indulgent, sodomites, thieves, misers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers, none of these will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).* Of course, those who do such things have no purity of heart. Indeed, they are unclean as Jesus Christ said when he showed how people would do what was not good: *But whatever comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and it is this that makes someone unclean. For from the heart come evil intentions: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander. These are the things that make a person unclean (Matthew 15:18-20).* It is like the story of a rich man and Lazarus. The rich man was not helping Lazarus, a poor man covered with sores. Both died. Lazarus was taken to heaven with Abraham while the rich man was buried and was suffering in hell called Hades (see Luke 16:19-31). Those who fail to be pure in the heart will have the same type of suffering in hell. Revelations has it that *Death and Hades were hurled into the burning lake. The burning lake is the second death, and anybody whose name could not be found written in the book of life was hurled into the burning lake (Revelations 20:14-15).* There were many sinners in the New Testament. Those of them who were opposing and fighting Jesus Christ and his disciples were really unclean and had no purity of heart. They could not see God. They were to join the devil in hell. We who are Christians and followers of Jesus Christ should not do as those sinners in the New Testament were doing. We should imitate Jesus Christ to gain eternal life.

CHAPTER FOUR

PEOPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHO WERE PURE IN HEART

THOSE WHO CLEANSE THEMSELVES FROM THE LATTER WILL BE INSTRUMENTS FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES, MADE HOLY, USEFUL TO THE MASTER AND PREPARED TO DO ANY GOOD WORD (2 TIMOTHY 2:21).

People who followed the way of Jesus Christ

59. The blessed people in the New Testament were really many and special. We can see them in the scriptures in the New Testament. St. Paul says a lot for people to be holy and pure. For example he says: *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).* Again he says: *Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky (Philippians 2:14-15).* Really, there are people who were holy in the New Testament. There were *people* who were favourable in obeying God and or in following Jesus Christ. As we know, Jesus Christ said: *Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).* We shall see people who were pure in heart by obeying God and Jesus Christ, the Son of God and also God.

Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of St. John the Baptist

60. Let us look at the family of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah was a priest and his wife was Elizabeth. They had no child. Elizabeth was barren. They were getting old. As Zechariah was serving in the Temple, the angel of the Lord came to him and said to him: *Zechariah, do not be afraid, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.* Even though Zechariah was not clear about this, and the angel silenced him and he would not have any power of speech until what the

angel said happened, Elizabeth really conceived. The angel Gabriel informed Mary about her and Mary went and Elizabeth praised Mary saying: *Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled* (Luke 1:42-45). She gave birth to the son and named him John and people who wanted to call the child Zechariah had to consult Zechariah who was silenced and he asked for a writing material and wrote: *His name is John*. And doing this, his power of speech returned. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he spoke a prophecy: *Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel* (see Luke 1:57-79). Indeed, Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were really holy as people who were doing the will of God.

John the Baptist a great child of God

61. Their son, John was really the man of God. He was called John the Baptist because he was baptizing people. John the Baptist said: *Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand* (Matthew 3:1-2). When he was baptizing people in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. While he was baptizing people for repentance, he told them about Jesus saying: *I baptize you in water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand, he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out* (Matthew 3:11-12). Jesus came to him for baptism and he said to him: *It is I who need baptism from you, and yet you come to me!* When Jesus told him, *Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that uprightness demands*, he baptised Jesus. After the baptism of Jesus, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and a voice came from heaven, *This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him* (see Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; see also John 1:32-34).

John the Baptist, a holy man and was commended by Jesus Christ

62. John the Baptist continued to do holy things and was also telling people to stop evil things. Jesus really praised him with these words: *Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet; he is the one whom scripture says, Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you to prepare your way before you. In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. Since John the Baptist came, up to this present time, the kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm. Because it was towards John that all the prophecies of the prophets and of the Law were leading; and he, if you will believe me, is the Elijah who was to return. Anyone who has ears should listen* (Matthew 11:9-13). John the Baptist warned King Herod who married Herodias the wife of Herod's brother Philip and Herod arrested him and put him in prison. With the request of the daughter of Herodias, John the Baptist was killed and his disciples took the body and buried him (see Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29; Luke 3:19-20). As we see in Acts, John the Baptist did a lot to help people to get away from sins: *Before the coming of Jesus, John preached to all the people of Israel that they should turn from their sins and be baptized* (Acts 13:24). Indeed, John the Baptist was a holy man and helped people in Israel to get out of sins and be holy also. He had really the purity of heart for God.

The great Joseph, the husband of Blessed Virgin Mary

63. Another holy man was Joseph the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus Christ. As we can see in the Bible, he was to marry Mary but they lived together he saw that she was found to be with a child in her womb. Joseph wanted to divorce Mary informally. But the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said to him: *Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.* Indeed, Joseph obeyed and took Mary and had no intercourse with her and when she gave birth to the son, he named him Jesus as he was told by the angel of the Lord (see Matthew 1:18-25). Indeed, Joseph was

most obedient to God and did all as God told him through the angel. Joseph took Mary to David's town called Bethlehem and Mary gave birth to her son there and on the eighth day, the child was circumcised and they gave him the name Jesus (see Luke 2:1-21). When the Magi came and went to King Herod and told him about the birth of the infant king of the Jews, Herod wanted to kill the child. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and asked him to take Mary and her child to Egypt. Joseph obeyed immediately and took them to Egypt where they remained until the death of King Herod. They came back from Egypt but he took them to Nazareth in order to protect them against Archelaus who succeeded King Herod. Joseph was really a holy man and lived in obedience to God.

Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ

64. Another person who was very holy is Mary, the mother of Jesus. In the Gospel according to Luke, we see how Mary showed that she was holy by being obedient to God. The angel Gabriel sent by God to Mary said to her: *Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.* Mary was disturbed by these words and asked herself what these words would mean and the angel continued saying: *Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.* Mary who was a virgin said to the angel: *But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?* The angel replied to her: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.* Mary showed her good behaviour by accepting what the angel Gabriel told her and said: *You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said* (see Luke 1:26-38). Mary went to her cousin Elizabeth and Elizabeth showed that Mary was blessed with the son in her womb (see Luke 1:40-45). Mary said the Magnificat - *My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord ... He has come to the help of Israel his servants, mindful of his faithful love – according to the*

promise he made to our ancestors – of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever (see Luke 1:46-55).

Blessed Virgin Mary all the time holy

65. Mary was really faithful to God through her son, the Son of God. With the birth of her son, Jesus, as a virgin, Mary showed special goodness. Mary remained always a virgin. When the shepherds visited the place where she was with her son and Joseph, the report about Mary is: *As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart (see Luke 2:15-19).* She did everything well with her son Jesus. They circumcised him and named him Jesus and presented him in the temple where Simeon, a blessed man blessed them and said to Mary: *Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed – and a sword will pierce your soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare (Luke 2:22-35).* Even when Jesus was twelve years old, they went with him to the Temple in Jerusalem and Jesus did not go back with them. After three days they found him in the Temple and Mary said to him: *My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.* Jesus replied: *Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?* And he went back to Nazareth with his mother and Joseph and it was reported that his mother stored up all these things in her heart (see Luke 2:41-52).

Blessed Virgin Mary was respectful to her Son Jesus Christ

66. Mary was respectful to her son, Jesus. As we can see, when they went for wedding at Cana in Galilee, and Mary saw that the wine was finishing, she told Jesus: *They have no wine.* And Jesus replied to her: *Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not come yet.* And Mary said to the servants, *Do whatever he tells you.* In fact Jesus told the servants to bring water into six stone water jars and take them to the president of the feast. They did and the president saw wonderful wine that were brought and said to the bridegroom: *Everyone serves good wine first and the worse wine when the guests are well wined; but you have kept the best wine till now.* Jesus really respected his mother Mary by doing the miracle of creating wine for the people (see John 2:1-10). Again, Mary followed

Jesus Christ who was crucified and when Jesus Christ who was on the cross saw her mother and a disciple whom he loved, Jesus said to Mary: *Woman, this is your son*. Her new son was the loved disciple of Jesus and to that disciple Jesus said: *This is your mother*. The disciple took Mary to live in his home (see John 19:25-27). Indeed, Mary joined the apostles and disciples in praying after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ: *With one heart all these joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers* (see Acts 1:12-14). Mary. The Blessed Virgin Mary was really holy and fully with purity in heart for God.

Holy Apostle Peter

67. We can see from the apostles and disciples some of those who were holy as in the New Testament. We have Peter who was Simon whom Jesus took with his brother Andrew. Simon was doing well even though he also did what were not good. One of the things was when they were on the sea and saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were terrified and Jesus said to them: *Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid*. Peter answered: *Lord, if it you, tell me to come to you across the water*. And Jesus told him to come and he went but he took fright because of the wind and he cried to the Lord to save him and Jesus took him with his hand and said: *You have so little faith, why did you doubt?* (see Matthew 15:22-33). Again, when Jesus told them that he should go to Jerusalem and suffer and be put to death and to be raised up on the third day, Simon whom Jesus called Rock, said to him: *Heaven preserve you, Lord, this must not happen to you*. And Jesus said to him: *Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because you are thinking not as God thinks but as human beings* (see Matthew 16:21-23). When Jesus was washing the feet of the disciples and when he wanted to do that to Simon Peter, Simon Peter refused until Jesus said to him: *If I do not wash you, you can have no share with me*. Then Simon Peter said: *Well then, Lord, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well*. But Jesus said: *No one who has had a bath needs washing, since a person is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are* (see John 13:6-11).

Simon Peter had failures but rose to true love of Jesus Christ

68. Again, when Jesus said that they would fall away from him, Peter said: *Even if all fall away from you, I will never fall away.* Jesus said to him: *In truth I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will have disowned me three times.* Even though Peter said that he would never disown Jesus Christ, he did deny three times that he was a disciple of Jesus and once the cock crowed Peter remembered what Jesus said and went away and wept bitterly (see Matthew 26:30-35; Mark 14:26-31; Luke 22:31-34, 39; John 13:36-38, 16:33; also Matthew 26:60-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-62 and John 18:16-18, 25-27). After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Jesus asked Peter three times whether he, Peter, loved him and Peter said that he loved him: *Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others ... Simon son of John, do you love me? ... Simon son of John, do you love me.* Indeed, Simon Peter said that he loved Jesus and Jesus gave him what to do: *Feed my lambs ... Look after my sheep ... Feed my sheep* (see John 21:15-19).

Simon Peter showing good matters about Jesus Christ

69. Even before the faults of Simon Peter, Simon Peter showed good things about Jesus Christ. He had profession of faith when Jesus Christ was asking them about himself. Jesus said to them: *But you, who do you say I am?* And Simon answered: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.* And Jesus said to him: *Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community. And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven* (see Matthew 16:13-20). Simon Peter showed his love for Christ when Jesus went with Peter, James and John to a high mountain and Moses and Elijah appeared to them. Peter said: *Lord, it is wonderful for us to be here; if you want me to, I will make three shelters here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah* (Matthew 17:4). At another place when Jesus was left by many of his disciples after his teaching about holy bread and wine, Jesus said to his twelve apostles: *What about you, do you want to go away too?* It was Simon Peter who

answered him saying: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God* (see John 6:64-69).

Simon Peter in full love for Jesus Christ

70. Simon Peter who denied Jesus when Jesus was being troubled by the chief priests and elders showed that he was later fully in love with Jesus Christ. After the Pentecost day when the Holy Spirit came to the apostles, Simon Peter with the Eleven apostles did a lot to show their love for Christ by preaching to the people. They converted three thousand persons and baptised them (see Acts 2:1-41). Peter went on to do the work given to them by Jesus. He cured a lame man and preached a lot. He and John were arrested and told not to make statements or teach in the name of Jesus. Peter and John were confident about their work for Jesus and they replied to those people: *You must judge whether in God's eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God. We cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard* (see Acts 3; 4:1-20). They were ready to suffer rather than abandon the work of Jesus Christ.

Simon Peter suffering for Jesus Christ

71. Later, Peter and the other apostles were imprisoned but the Lord released them at night and told them to go to the Temple and preach. They went and the following day when those in the Sanhedrin could not see them in prison and somebody told them that the apostles were in the Temple, they were brought from the temple to the Sanhedrin who told them: *We gave you a strong warning not to preach in this name and what have you done? You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and seem determined to fix the guilt for this man's death on us.* Peter and the apostles replied: *Obedience to God comes before obedience to men; it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus, whom you executed by hanging on a tree. By his own right hand God has now raised him up to be leader and Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins through him to Israel. We are witnesses to this, we and the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.* The people really wanted to put them to death but because of the intervention of Gamaliel, a member of the Sanhedrin, they flogged the apostles

(see Acts 5:17-41). Peter and the apostles showed their faithfulness to God. Peter really kept doing the right things as a disciple of Christ even though he did not agree to do what a voice like the Lord was telling him about eating what he believed was profane or unclean (see Acts 10:9-16; Acts 11:1-10). Peter was really holy and preached a lot and wrote two letters which are in the New Testament. In the first one he gave a very important teaching which should help all Christians: *Your minds, then, must be sober and ready for action; put all your hope in the grace brought to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Do not allow yourselves to be shaped by the passions of your old ignorance, but as obedient children, be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the model of the Holy One who calls us, since scripture says, 'Be holy, for I am holy'* (1 Peter 1:13-16).

John loved wonderfully by Jesus Christ

72. Another very holy apostle is John. He was one of the twelve apostles and Jesus loved him wonderfully. Even though Jesus Christ did not agree to what the mother of Zebedee who was the mother of John and James, the sons of Zebedee begged him (see Matthew 20:20-23), Jesus really loved John. John was the disciple Jesus loved who was reclining next to Jesus (see John 13:23). He was the disciple whom Jesus loved to whom he gave Mary his Mother as his mother (see John 19:25-27). When Jesus had risen from the dead he still said something about the disciple whom he loved. Peter said to Jesus about the disciple whom Jesus loved: *What about him, Lord?* And Jesus said: *If I want him to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow me.* The rumour was that the disciple loved by Jesus would not die even though Jesus did not say to Peter that the disciple he loved would not die (see John 21:20-23). John was always doing well. He did a lot of preaching and wrote three letters – 1 John, 2 John and 3 John. The Book of Revelation was reported as The Revelation to John. The opening of the Revelation to John is: *A revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him so that he could tell his servants what is now to take place very soon; he sent his angel to make it known to his servant John, and John has borne witness to the Word of God and to the witness of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw* (Revelation 1:12). It is most likely that John wrote this Revelation which is also called Apocalypse.

Saul who became Paul was converted by Jesus through Ananias

73. While most of the apostles of Jesus Christ, except Judas Iscariot were holy, a person who was not in the beginning a disciple or apostle of Jesus Christ came to be a very holy man. This is about St. Paul who was earlier Saul. He was with those fighting against the followers of Jesus. He was one of the people who fought and killed Stephen. Those who were killing Stephen put their clothes at the feet of Saul and Saul approved the killing of Stephen (see Acts 7:58; Acts 8:1). He went on to slaughter the disciples of the Lord. He arranged to go to Damascus to arrest and take to Jerusalem the followers of Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ stopped him and converted him. As he was going to Damascus Jesus pulled him down and said: *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* And when Saul wanted to know who was saying that to him, Jesus replied: *I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do* (see Acts 9:1-6). He and other went to the city and Ananias told by the Lord converted Saul and baptised him and he became a wonderful follower of Jesus Christ. He even began to preach at Damascus where he was going to arrest the disciples of Christ. From there Saul became a very holy man and a man who did a lot to convert many people both Israelites and others called pagans.

Saul who became Paul did a lot of ministry and preaching

74. Saul who became Paul did a lot of preaching Acts 13:17-51. He did a lot of miracles (see Acts 14:8-10). Paul and Silas were imprisoned and they were praying and singing in the prison and God did something to deliver them by making all the doors of the prison open and the chains on the prisoners fell. However, Paul and the prisoners did not escape and by this he converted the gaoler who woke up and thought that the prisoners had escaped (see Acts 16:16-40). Paul raised a dead man (see Acts 20:7-12). Paul came to Jerusalem and was arrested (see Acts 21:27-40). He was tried in Jerusalem but he was taken to Rome where though he was imprisoned, he was *proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ with complete fearless and without any hindrance from anyone*(see Acts 28:23-31). Paul was really great in preaching. He gave the

Letter to the Church in Rome (Romans), the first and second letter to the Church at Corinth (1 and 2 Corinthians), the letter to the Church in Galatia (Galatians), the letter to the Church at Ephesus (Ephesians), the letter to the Church at Philippi (Philippians), the letter to the Church at Colossae (Colossians), First and Second letters to the Church in Thessalonica (1 and 2 Thessalonians), First and second letters to Timothy (1 and 2 Timothy), the Letter to Titus (Titus) and the letter to Philemon (Philemon). In all these letters, Paul gave a lot of good teachings. He warned people against sinning (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-8). To the Philippians he said: *And my God will fulfil all your needs out of the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. And so glory be to God the Father, for ever and ever. Amen. My greetings to every one of God's holy people in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings. All God's holy people send you their greetings, especially those of Caesar's household. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit* (Philippians 4:19-23).

Disciples who were holy and great in Christianity

75. Most of the apostles and some of the disciples kept away from sins and did a lot to honour God. We can see the preaching of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We can also see the letter to the Hebrews, the letter of James and the letter of Jude. Most of the apostles and disciples in the New Testament were really holy and were canonized as saints by the Catholic Church. We have very great saints who were not human being. They are SS. Michael, Gabriel and Raphael the Archangels. They are Archangels who did wonderful things in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Other saints of the New Testament are St. Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph the Husband of Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, St. Peter Chief Apostle, St. John the Apostle, St. Philip the Apostle, St. James the Apostle, another St. James the Apostle, St. Simon the Apostle, St. Jude the Apostle, St. Andrew the Apostle, St. Thomas the Apostle, St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist, St. Paul the Apostle, St. Matthias the Apostle, St. Bartholomew the Apostle, St. Luke the Evangelist, St. Mark the Evangelist, St. Stephen the first Martyr. St. Timothy the Bishop and St. Titus the Bishop, SS. Joachim and Anne the parents of Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Martha, the sister of Mary of Bethany and Lazarus. St. Mary Magdalene whom

Jesus Christ saved by removing seven demons from her became a special lover of Jesus Christ. She was with Jesus Christ when He was crucified and she was the first person to seek for the dead Jesus in His tomb. She was named the “Apostle to the apostles”. We have also Holy Innocents who were martyred by King Herod. The Catholic Church celebrates these saints mostly in solemnity and Feast. The celebrations of Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph her Husband, and the Birth of St. John the Baptist and St. Peter and St. Paul are with Solemnity. The ceremonies of the Archangels, the Apostles and Evangelists and St. Stephen the first Martyr are with Feast, while those of the others are Memorial. We ask them to pray for us so that we can join them in heaven.

CHAPTER FIVE

LET US KEEP AWAY FROM SIN IN ORDER TO BE PURE IN HEART

DO YOU NOT REALISE THAT PEOPLE WHO DO EVIL WILL NEVER INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD? (1 CORINTHIANS 6:9).

Message for Christians

76. From what we have seen in the Old Testament and the New Testament, salvation should come from purity in heart and purity in heart is surely far away from sinful actions. People who commit sins are really unclean and will not see God unless they repent completely. What Jesus Christ said is clear: *Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God* (Matthew 5:8). Indeed, those who are pure in heart are people who do not ruin their heart with sin. That is why people who want to be pure in heart must keep away from sinning. We should see what the scriptures have said about sins. As Christians we have to be careful not to commit sins knowing that sins make people unclean as Jesus Christ said about sins: *From the heart come evil intentions: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander. These are the things that make a person unclean* (see Matthew 15:18-20).

Let us keep away from sins in order to be clean before God

77. Sins really make people unclean. That is why St. Paul gave several teachings against sin as he said in his letter to the Church at Corinth: *Do you not realize that people who do evil will never inherit the kingdom of God? Make no mistake – the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the self-indulgence, sodomites, thieves, misers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers, none of those will inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). He also said in the letter to the Church in Galatia: *When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things. And about these, I tell you now as I have*

told you in the past, that people who behave in this way will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Baptised Christians should keep away from sins

78. Of course there are many sins, especially mortal sins and we who are baptised Christians should completely keep away from any of the sins in order to be blessed as the pure in heart. St. John said this about those who commit sins: *Whoever sins, acts wickedly, because all sin is wickedness. Now you are well aware that he has appeared in order to take sins away, and that in him there is no sin. No one who remains in him sins, and whoever sins has neither seen him or recognized him. ... Whoever lives sinfully belongs to the devil, since the devil has been a sinner from the beginning (1 John 3:4-6, 8).* Christians must keep away from sins. That is what St. John said: *We are well aware that no one who is a child of God sins, because he who was born from God protects him, and the Evil One has no hold over him. We are well aware that we are from God, and the whole world is in the power of the Evil One (1 John 5:18-19).*

Christians should be careful to avoid evil

79. As Christians, we must be careful about the things going on in the world, knowing that the world can be led by the Evil One. St. John really warns Christians who are supposed to have overcome the Evil One, saying: *Do not love the world, or what is in the world. If anyone does love the world, the love of the Father finds no place in him, because everything there is in the world – disordered bodily desires, disordered desires of the eyes, pride in possession – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world, with all its disordered desires, is passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains for ever (1 John 2:15-17).* As we ought to know, disordered desires (lust of the flesh), disordered desires of the eyes (lust of the eyes) and pride in possession (pride of life) are really mortal sins which Christians should avoid.

Sins are contrary to the commandments of God

80. Sins are contrary to the commandments of God. The commandments of God as given to the Israelites in the Old Testament are: *I am the Lord your God who*

*brought you out of Egypt, where you lived as slaves. You shall have no other gods to rival me. ... You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not leave unpunished anyone who misuses his name. ... Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. ... Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false evidence against your neighbour. You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's house. You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's spouse, or servant, man or woman, or ox, or donkey, or any of your neighbour's possessions (see Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-22). In the New Testament, most of these commandments were also mentioned. Jesus mentioned some for a rich young man who asked Jesus about which commandments he must keep in order to enter into eternal life. Jesus said to him: *These: You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false witness. Honour your father and your mother. You shall love your neighbour as yourself* (see Matthew 19:16-19; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23).*

The ten commandments of God

81. The Catholic Church presents the ten commandments of God which are summarized in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as a traditional Catechetical formula: 1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me. 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. 3. Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day. 4. Honour your father and your mother. 5. You shall not kill. 6. You shall not commit adultery. 7. You shall not steal. 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. 9. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife. 10. You shall not covet your neighbour's goods (Catechism of the Catholic Church, pp. 496-497 after no. 2051). In brief, the Catechism of the Catholic Church has the statement: The Ten Commandments, in their fundamental content, state grave obligations. However, obedience to these precepts also implies obligations in matter which is, in itself, light (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 504, no. 2081). Of course Jesus wanted his disciples to keep his commandments as he was keeping the commandments of God the Father: *If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and*

remain in his love (John 15:10). Christians should keep the commandments of Jesus as well as the commandments of God. That is why the Catholic Church gives us these commandments.

Sins against the first commandment of God - Idolatry

82. We see that the first commandment forbids worshipping gods other than the Lord our God. Worshipping or honouring gods is idolatry. The Church teaching says: Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honours and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 513). It is necessary to see the teaching of the Catholic Church about the Ten Commandments of God because acting contrary to the commandments of God is surely sins which remove purity from the hearts of the sinners. That is why we should avoid sins completely in order to have the purity of heart and be able to see God.

Let us keep away from idolatry

83. Let us look at some of the sins which destroy people, even people who have been baptised. Idolatry, the worship and honour of gods, is really a very serious evil. In the Old Testament all those who were following idols were really enemies of God. For example, in the Book of Judges we see that Israelites did what was evil in the Lord's eyes by serving Baals, who were gods. We see how the Lord handled the people: *Then the Lord's anger grew hot against Israel. He handed them over to pillagers who plundered them; he delivered them to the enemies surrounding them, and they were no longer able to resist their enemies. Whenever they mounted an expedition, the Lord's hand was there to foil them, as the Lord had told them and as the Lord had sworn to them, so that they were in dire distress* (see Judges 2:11-15). However, we can see how some Israelites refused to worship the gods which King Nebuchadnezzar established as the golden statue. The Israelites – Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego – refused to worship the golden statue and King Nebuchadnezzar threatened them saying: *If you refuse to worship it, you will be thrown forthwith into the burning fiery*

furnace; then which of the gods could save you from my power (Daniel 3:15). Of course they refused to worship the idols and they were thrown into burning fiery furnace and God saved them. King Nebuchadnezzar seeing them alive in the burning fiery furnace with a person he did not know brought them out and said: Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego; he has sent his angel to rescue his servants who, putting their trust in him, defied the order of the king, and preferred to forfeit their bodies rather than serve or worship any god but their God (see Daniel 3:24/91-28/95). These three Israelites had shown what we as children of God should be doing with false gods.

Idolatry is a very serious sin

84. In the New Testament, people were warned about idolatry. Christians as children of God are not to worship idols. St. Paul in many places warned people against the worship of false gods (see Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5-6; 1 Corinthians 6:9). Idolatry is a very serious sin for any Christians who worship idols, that is, false gods. In our area, there are pagans who worship idols that are false gods and goddesses. They give services to these idols and worship the gods. Often they do these things as traditions and custom for the people. They also take oaths by the gods. Unfortunately, some Christians take such oaths. Doing it is of course a mortal sin, it is idolatry. Again, some people take sick persons to idols for healing. Even if they are healed, they are really dead because of the mortal sin of idolatry. Christians must avoid participating in traditional titles of idols and gods. Such traditional titles called Igbo Mythology are idolatrous for any Christian participating in them. Another evil which people do is using the gods for the masquerades. Such masquerades set with idols cause mortal sins for Christians who join in them. It is evident that Christians who join such masquerades with idols are really idolatrous. Christians should definitely keep away from anything that is done with the gods and goddesses even if it is the tradition of the place. Idolatry is a grave sin and any Christian doing idolatry in any way is really a child of the devil. We must be very careful to keep away from idolatry which is really a mortal sin.

The second commandment

85. The second commandment is “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 518; see Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11). The name of God is very important and Christians should keep God’s name faithfully. No Christian should ever abuse the name of God as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: The second commandment *forbids the abuse of God’s name, i.e., every improper use of the names of God, Jesus Christ, but also of the Virgin Mary and all the saints* (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 519, no. 2146). Indeed, we have one God and three divine Persons – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We should not in any way abuse the name of God for the improper use of the name of God is a sin. As Christians, we must respect the name of God and indeed the names of God – the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ told his apostles and disciples to do baptism in name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:19). As people baptised we should respect the name of God with which we were baptised. That is why we begin our prayer with ‘In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen’. We must always respect the name of God and be clean, for anyone who abuses the name of God will be definitely unclean because the person sinned against the second commandment. May God help us to respect the name of God!

Sins against third commandment of God

86. The third commandment was in the Old Testament about the respect for the Sabbath Day, the seventh day of the week: *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work* (see Exodus 20:8-18; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). With the New Testament, this third commandment was changed to the Lord’s Day, the day when Jesus Christ, the Son of God gained his resurrection from the dead. The Lord’s Day is now Sunday. We see this in the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 524; no. 2175). Therefore, Sunday is the day of holiness

on which the Catholic Church celebrates the Lord's Day and his Eucharist as the Church says: Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church (Canon 1246 §1). The Catholic Church also said: On Sundays and other holydays of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass. They are also to abstain from such work or business that would inhibit the worship to be given to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, or the due relaxation of mind and body (Canon 1247). Participating in the Mass on Sundays is very necessary for Catholics and any Catholic who keeps away from Sunday Mass unless sick or with serious problems is a sinner. This is also for Catholics who do normal work, business and marketing on Sundays. That is why the Catholic Church says that on Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 527, no. 2185). Christians who want to have the purity of heart must do their best to join in Sunday Mass and keep away from work, business and marketing.

The fourth commandment of God – Honour your father and mother

87. Catholics should also keep the fourth commandment which says *honour your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you* (see Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 531, no. 2199). St. Paul really says about children and their parents: *Children, be obedient to your parents in the Lord – that is what uprightness demands. The first commandment that has a promise attached to it is: Honour your father and your mother, and the promise is: so that you may have long life and prosper in the land* (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20). The first commandment which was said by St. Paul is in fact the fourth commandment as in the teaching of the Church. Indeed, those who were born by their parents, whether they are still young or old, are expected to respect and obey their parents. Disobedience and disrespect of parents are really sinful as such matters are against the fourth commandment of God. However,

children of parents are not expected to obey their parents in doing what is a sin but in other matters that are not sinful. Children, whether young or old should always respect and obey their parents. The Catholic Church says in Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Obedience toward parents ceases with the emancipation of the children; not so respect, which is always owed to them." (Catechism of the Catholic Church p. 535 no. 2217). St. Paul says about the parents: *And parents, never drive your children to resentment but bring them up with correction and advice inspired by the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). The Catechism of the Catholic Church shows what is required of the children to their parents: Children owe their parents respect, gratitude, just obedience, and assistance. Filial respect fosters harmony in all of the family life (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 543, no. 2251). However, parents should also respect their children by leading them into good things such as faith, prayers, good works and all the virtues. By respecting and obeying parents, the children follow the commandment of God and in that way obey God and be pure in heart with love of God.

Killing persons is the sin against the fifth commandment of God

88. Christians should also keep the fifth commandment of God: *You shall not kill* (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17, Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 544). One of the sins which we will look at is killing, the sin against the fifth commandment of God. Killing of people by anybody is a very great mortal sin. Jesus really gave his own commandments about killing saying: *You heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who calls a brother "Fool" will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and anyone who call him "Traitor" will answer for it in hell fire* (Matthew 5:21-22). Killing and fighting are really evil. Indeed, killing of a person unless by accident is a grave sin and Christians must keep away from killing anybody. Those who arranged for the killing of Jesus Christ did commit mortal sin but Jesus Christ who loved even those who did harm to him said: *Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing* (Luke 23:34). This was the same with those who killed Stephen and Stephen who loved even those mishandling

him said: *Lord, do not hold this sin against them (Acts 7:60)*. We can see in the Catechism of the Catholic Church this teaching: The fifth commandment forbids *direct and intentional killing* as gravely sinful. The murderer and those who cooperate voluntarily in murder commit a sin that cries out to heaven for vengeance (Catechism of the Catholic Church p. 547, no. 2268). This Catechism touched the killing of Cain who killed his brother Abel and the Lord said to him: *What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. Now be cursed and banned from the ground that has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood at your hands. When you till the ground it will no longer yield up its strength to you. A restless wanderer you will be on earth (Genesis 4:10-12)*.

Unintentional killing

89. The Catechism of the Catholic Church said something about unintentional killing: Unintentional killing is not morally imputable. But one is not exonerated from grave offense if, without proportionate reasons, he has acted in a way that brings about someone's death, even without the intention to do so (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 547, no. 2269). It was said: The murder of a human being is gravely contrary to the dignity of the person and the holiness of the Creator (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 558, no. 2320), Christians should keep away from killing of people in order to keep the commandments of God especially the fifth commandment. Let us keep away from all sins including the sin of killing of people in order to have the purity of the heart.

Sixth commandment forbids adultery

90. We should do our best to keep the sixth commandment of God which is: You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18; Catechism of the Catholic Church, p.560). Another mortal sin which is very much condemned in the Bible is adultery and sexual immorality. Jesus himself added adultery to the sins which he said make people unclean: *murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander. These are the things that make a person unclean (Matthew 15:19-20)*. Jesus also said something about adultery: *You have heard how it was said, You*

shall not commit adultery. But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28). He was really opposed to any action that would be adulterous. St. Paul shows that sexual immorality and vice are very serious sins (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-6). He says: *Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach is for foods; and God will destroy them both. But the body is not for sexual immorality; it is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. ... Keep away from sexual immorality. All other sins that someone may commit are done outside the body; but the sexual immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you and whom you received from God. ... So use your body for the glory of God (see 1 Corinthians 6:12-20).* Sexual immorality and vice can be about what persons do with themselves or with others. A person with himself or herself, man and man, man and woman, woman and woman, woman and man, boy and boy, boy and girl, girl and girl and girl and boy can do what is sexually immoral by what is called adultery – abusing the body because of handling the sex badly.

Sexual immorality and vice to be fully avoided

91. For Christians, especially Catholics, only a man married with a woman after the holy wedding can do the sexual practices with each other. Such Christians who are properly married man and woman are free to do their sexual matters well as approved by God. But any sexual practice with oneself or with another whether a man, woman, boy or girl without pure marriage is sexual immorality. That is what St. Paul is warning all: *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).* That is also what St. Paul says: *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).* Any person, especially a baptised Christian, who does sexual vice is definitely due for eternal punishment because of his or her mortal sin. All Christians should, therefore, keep away from sexual immorality which is also adultery so that they can be pure before God.

Christians are not to steal, according to the seventh commandment of God

92. Another sin is stealing which is against the seventh commandment of God. Those who are thieves generally steal. As Jesus said: *Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for your selves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal* (Matthew 6:19-20). Taking the things of other people without informing them and getting their approval is surely stealing. We can see according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church this fact: The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbour and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 577, no. 2401). It is again said: The seventh commandment forbids *theft*, that is, usurping another's property against the reasonable will of the owner. There is no theft if consent can be presumed or if refusal is contrary to reason and universal destination of goods (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 578, no. 2408). Christians should completely keep away from stealing. Some people steal in the place where they work. Some take away for themselves the money and materials of the places where they are working. This is real stealing and real sin. All Christians should keep away from stealing so as to have the purity of heart with which to see God. We must also avoid bribery, inflation of contracts, embezzlement of funds belongs to societies, government or Church; extortion armed robbery, yahoo boys i.e. internet robbery and any other evil.

Keeping away from sin against the eighth commandment of God

93. We must also keep away from sins against the eighth commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20; Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 591). Jesus said: *Again, you have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord. But I say this to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, since that is God's throne; or by earth, since that is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black. All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the Evil One*

(Matthew 5:33-37). Obeying Jesus Christ we should not bear false witness against anybody. We are expected to be good and truthful in all we say and do in order to keep the commandments of God. Truth is very important and necessary in our lives as Christians. We should imitate Jesus who as the Word of God showed us the truth as St. John said: *The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Indeed, Jesus said: *I am the Way; I am Truth and Life* (John 14:6). We should, therefore, imitate Jesus Christ in living in truth.

The teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

94. The Catechism of the Catholic Church showed the various offenses against truth such as false witness and perjury, rash judgment, detraction and calumny which destroy the reputation and honour of one's neighbour, every word or attitude which by flattery, adulation or complaisance encourages and confirms another in malicious acts and perverse conducts, boasting and bragging, and lying against another (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, pp. 594-596; nos. 2475-2487). Truthfulness is very important that is why it was said: Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and guarding against duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 600, no. 2505). Things done against the truth by saying what is false are sins and Christians who do such things must do reparation so that God will forgive them. May we always avoid lying and all types of falsehood so as to keep away from sins and have the purity of the heart and thus be faithful to our God and be able to see our God!

Sins against the ninth commandment of God

95. The keeping of the ninth commandment is also very necessary. The ninth commandment as seen in the Old Testament is: *You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's house. You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's spouse, or servant, man or woman, or ox, or donkey, or any of your neighbour's possessions* (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). Jesus Christ was really against what people do that are opposed to the commandments of God. It is adultery for a man to look at a woman lustfully. He said: *You have heard how it was said, You*

shall not commit adultery. But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28). That is why the ninth commandment is against lust or carnal concupiscence. Christians must be very careful in what they do with their heart as Jesus said that from the heart come evil intentions including adultery (see Matthew 15:19-20). We have from St. John the three kinds of covetousness or concupiscence that lead to very mortal sins – lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life (see 1 John 2:16). We must avoid all things which are covetous to our hearts and make sure that by keeping away from evils and sins we shall have purity of heart for the pure in heart are promised that they will see God face to face and be like him (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 603, no. 2519; 1 Corinthians 13:12 and 1 John 3:2). We should make sure that we have purity of heart as the Catechism Catholic Church says: Purity of heart will enable us to see God: it enables us even now to see things according to God. And again: Purity of heart requires the modesty which is patience, decency, and discretion. Modesty protects the intimate centre of the person (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 605, nos. 2531 and 2533). May God help us to keep away from evil with our neighbours about their house or wives or husbands and any other persons!

The tenth commandment

96. Let us take a look at the tenth commandment which as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, unfolds and completes the ninth, which is concerned with concupiscence of the flesh while the tenth forbids coveting the goods of another, as the root of theft, robbery, and fraud, which the seventh commandment forbids (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 606, no. 2534). The tenth commandment forbids avarice arising from a passion for riches and their attendant power and also envy which is sadness at the sight of another's goods and the immoderate desire to have them for oneself. This is a capital sin (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 611, nos. 2552 and 2553). We must avoid envy through good-will, humility, and abandonment to the providence of God and do everything in the way to have good heart for everything. We must avoid envy which is a capital sin and as St. Augustine said, the diabolical sin (see St. Augustine, *De catechizandis rubibus* 4, 8; *PL* 40, 315-316). Let us keep away from

this capital and diabolical sin so that we may have the purity of heart in order to be with our God. May God guide us to be fully in keeping with his commandments so that we are ever in favour of the commandments of Jesus Christ who as the Son of God kept completely the commandments of God the Father!

Christians should completely keep away from sins against the ten commandments of God

97. Having gone through the ten commandments of God as the Catholic Church has them, we must make sure that we keep ourselves out of the mortal sins that are contrary to the commandments. St. John says: *We are well aware that no one who is a child of God sins, because he who was born from God protects him, and the Evil One has no hold over him. We are well aware that we are from God, and the whole world is in the power of the Evil One. We are well aware also that the Son of God has come and he has given us understanding so that we may know the One who is true. We are in the One who is true as we are in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and this is eternal life. Children, be on your guard against false gods* (1 John 5:18-20). As people who have been baptized, we are the children of God and therefore we must keep away from sins especially mortal sins which are deadly sins, sins that will put such sinners to eternal death as St. John says: *There is sin that leads to death and I am not saying you must pray about that. Every kind of wickedness is sin, but not all sin leads to death* (1 John 5:16-17). Of course all mortal sins lead to eternal death.

What the Catholic Church says about grave sins

98. All Christians, especially Catholics, should know what the Catholic Church says about such sinners. The Catholic Church says in Canon Law: Anyone who is conscious of grave sin may not celebrate Mass or receive the Body of the Lord without previously having been to sacramental confession, unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, which includes the resolve to go to confession as soon as possible (Canon 916). Let all Catholics who have committed mortal sins go to sacramental confession and return to purity of

heart and possibility of eternal life. St. Paul says: *Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work* (2 Timothy 2:21). Revelation assures all good people of salvation: *Blessed are those who will have washed their robes clean, so that they will have the right to feed on the tree of life and can come through the gates into the city. Others must stay outside: dogs, fortune-tellers, and the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and every one of false speech and false life* (Revelation 22:14-15). May we all get out of sins, especially mortal sins so that we can gain eternal life and salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, Good Shepherd and Saviour!

CHAPTER SIX

LET US DO ALL THAT ARE EXPECTED FOR THE PURITY IN HEART

THOSE WHO CLEANSE THEMSELVES FROM THE LATTER WILL BE INSTRUMENTS FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES, MADE HOLY, USEFUL TO THE MASTER AND PREPARED TO DO ANY GOOD WORK (2 TIMOTHY 2:21).

Things that Catholics ought to be doing according to God's will

99. Having gone through evil and sins which destroy the purity of the heart we need to see what Christians who are clean before God can and should be doing in order to remain always with God. Jesus Christ the Son of God and God taught a lot to his apostles and disciples and told them a lot of things that they should do in order to be with him. We need also to see what the apostles and disciples, especially, the Catholic Church require from us who have been baptised in the Catholic Church. We are really the children of God and we are expected to do things that keep us together with God while we are on earth and ensure our eternal rest with God when we leave this world. As Christians, especially Catholics, we have many things which we should be doing as clean persons, people who have purity of heart before our God.

The teaching of Jesus Christ - almsgiving

100. Jesus taught people about almsgiving, prayer, fasting and true treasures. He showed how these things should be done. For almsgiving he said: *But when you give alms, your hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you* (Matthew 6:3-4). He told people not to do the almsgiving in a way of making pride for oneself so that people would praise them. We as Christians should do almsgiving to people in a way of keeping ourselves from public popularity. We should be doing the charity not by pride and personal popularity but in the way of handling things for the love of God. Unfortunately, some people who are Christians set out to publicly do the almsgiving in a way to get praises for themselves from people. We must be careful to quietly do a lot for the poor and

the needy so that as Jesus Christ said, God will reward us because of the way we do the charity.

Praying as Jesus Christ said

101. Again Jesus Christ told the people how to pray. He warned people about doing their prayer in a way to get credits and praises from people. He said: *And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites; they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you* (Matthew 6:5-6). Of course what Jesus was saying is about praying in a way to get praises from people. It does not mean that there cannot be public prayers but that people praying should not be doing it for their public favour. Whenever we pray both in private and in public, we should avoid seeking for our personal praises from people but do all for the glory of God. Some people even do prayers in order to gain a lot of money for themselves from people. That is of course contrary to what Jesus Christ expects of us. Jesus Christ showed that we should be very careful with money for as he said, *No one can be the slave of two masters; he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money* (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). It is not that Christians should not have money but it is not good for Christians to use prayers and missions to God to get personal money. Jesus also warned about babbling with prayers as the gentiles do. Some Christians even babble with prayers because they want people to praise them and some to get a lot of money from people. Jesus said: *In your prayers do not babble as gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him* (Matthew 6:7-8). As Christians, we must be careful to say prayers in the way to keep us close to God in our prayers.

Praying well as Christians

102. We as Christians should pray well. There are personal private prayers and there are public prayers in the Catholic Church. As Christians and especially as Catholics, we should say the prayers which the Church gives us. There are plenty of such prayers such as Our Father, Hail Mary, Litanies and other such prayers. The Catholic Church has such litanies as: Litany of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Litany of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Litany of the Holy Cross, Litany of the Blessed Sacrament, Litany of Divine Mercy, Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Litany of St. Joseph and Litany of the Saints. Of course there are still more litanies. We should do our best to pray these litanies. There is also the very important prayer of the Holy Rosary, the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Generally, the Church expects us to say the rosary everyday – on Sundays and Wednesdays the Glorious Mystery of the Rosary, and on Mondays and Saturdays the Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, and on Thursdays the Luminous Mystery of the Rosary, and on Tuesdays and Fridays the Sorrowful Mystery of the Rosary. We should make sure that we pray the Holy Rosary as the Church has established but we can also say all the Mysteries of the Rosary on a day. We Catholics should do our best with the prayers so that we can be with God and the saints all the times. We should always imitate Jesus Christ who prayed generally to God the Father when he was in the world. One of his prayers was reported by St. John. Jesus said the prayer to the Father saying: *Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; so that, just as you have given him power over all humanity, he may give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. ... Father, Upright One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them* (John 17:1-26). Let us imitate Jesus Christ in our prayers!

Celebrating Holy Mass

103. Another very important thing in our lives as Catholics is Holy Mass. Holy Mass is a great religious action which the Catholic Church established for Catholics to celebrate. The Holy Mass in the Catholic Church is really the most important and sacred act of worship. The Catholic Church has three parts in the

Mass. In the Masses for Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation and Solemnity the three parts are as follows: The first part is Introductory Rites with the Penitential Rite in which the people beg for forgiveness of their sins, then the Gloria and the Opening Prayer; the second part is the Liturgy of the Word for the readings from the sacred scriptures, including Gospel, Homily, Credo and Prayer of the faithful; and the third part is Liturgy of the Eucharist including the Eucharistic Prayer, the Our Father and Holy Communion with prayers and blessings. In the Masses for Feast the Gloria is said but without Credo, while the other Masses have no Gloria and no Credo. Mass is celebrated every day. Catholics are required to attend Masses every day but the participation in the Mass on days other than Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is not a law and those who do not participate in the Mass on other days outside Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation have not sinned. The law for participation in the Mass is for Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. The Catholic Church says: On Sundays and other holydays of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass and The obligation of participating in the Mass is satisfied by one who assists at Mass where it is celebrated in a catholic rite, either on the holyday itself or on the evening of the previous day (see Canon 1247 and 1248 §1).

Masses on Sundays and holy days of obligation are necessary

104. Masses on Sundays and holydays of obligation are necessary for Catholics. They are to participate in the Mass in time and throughout. Keeping away from the Mass on Sunday or holyday of obligation is a grave sin unless it is impossible for one to come for the Mass. Very sick persons and very old persons may not be able to go for Masses on Sundays and holy days of obligation. People who may not be able to go to the places where Masses are celebrated on Sundays and holy days of obligation because they are very far away from there and they have no ways of going to the places do not commit mortal sins. As it is in the third commandment of God for the Lord's Day, the faithful is bound to join in the celebration of the Mass on Lord's Day which is Sunday. The Catholic Church has this statement: The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. "Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost

holy day of obligation in the universal Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 525, no. 2177). Catholics both young and old should make sure that they participate in the Holy Masses on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation in order to observe the third commandment and also to gain the blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ who is joined in the Mass.

It is very important for Catholics to participate in Masses on Sunday and holy days of obligation

105. It is very important to be at in time for Masses on Sundays and holy days of obligation. Those participating in such Masses must do their best to be in the church before the starting of the Mass. Some people just come when they want, not minding the time for the beginning of the Mass. Especially on Sunday Masses and holy days of obligation Masses, the participation in the two major parts of the Mass is very necessary. The two major parts are the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word is part of the reading of the scriptures and the Gospel and homily. It is necessary that Catholics should be there for the readings in order to take the Word of God and hear the homily given at the Mass. The Catholic Church shows the importance of the Liturgy of the Word: When the sacred scriptures are read in the church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his word, is proclaiming his Gospel (S.C.D.W., *Memoriale Domini*, 29 May, 1969, no. 9). The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the celebration of sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ as it was said: Christ our Lord instituted the paschal sacrifice and meal at the Last Supper (S.C.D.W., *Memoriale Domini*, 29 May, 1969, no. 48). The celebration of the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite are very important actions in following the great thing which Jesus Christ gave, His Body and Blood. That is why it is necessary for Catholics to come in time for Mass and participate well especially on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

Receiving Holy Communion is necessary for Catholics

106. Another very important thing is the reception of the Holy Communion, especially in the Mass. Jesus Christ gave his apostles and disciples His Body and Blood. As they were eating at the Passover supper, Jesus took bread and said the

blessing and gave it to His disciples saying: *Take it and eat, this is my body*. And he took a cup and giving thanks said: *Drink from this, all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins* (see Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). Even before he instituted the bread and wine to be His Body and Blood, Jesus had told the people that they should take his flesh and blood. Those who would not eat his flesh and drink his blood would not have life but those who would eat flesh and drink his blood would have eternal life (see John 6:53-58). The Catholic Church really wants Catholics to participate well in the Mass and especially in the Eucharist. In the Sacred Liturgy, the Church says: At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. ... The Church, therefore, earnestly desires the Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. ... The more perfect form of participation in the Mass whereby the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's Body from the same sacrifice, is warmly recommended (see The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December, 1963, nos. 47 – 49, 55).

Catholics with purity of heart should receive Holy Communion

107. Catholics should receive Holy Communion, especially in the Mass and especially on Masses on Sundays and holy days of obligation. Of course, only the people with purity of heart are allowed to receive the Holy Communion. Canon Law says: It is most strongly recommended that the faithful receive Holy Communion in the course of a Eucharistic celebration. If, however, for good reason they ask for it apart from the Mass, it is to be administered to them, observing the liturgical rites (Canon 918). Receiving Holy Communion is very important for Catholics to do what the Catholic Church recommends and what Jesus Christ demanded. It is also the rule that anybody who wants to receive Holy Communion should abstain from all food and drink for at least one hour with the

sole exception of water and medicine (Canon 919 §1). Holy Communion will surely grant those who receive it eternal life as long as they receive it with purity of heart.

Catholics should keep away from sin in order to receive Holy Communion

108. While the Church wants Catholics to receive Holy Communion especially in Masses, the Catholics who committed mortal sins should not receive Holy Communion. In fact, the Church does not want those who are conscious of grave sin to celebrate Mass or receive the Body of Christ unless they had gone to sacramental confession or they had not been able to go for confession but make an act of perfect contrition and resolve to go to confession as soon as possible (see Canon 916). Catholics should therefore make sure that they keep away from grave sins and make sure that they receive Holy Communion at Masses. As the Canon Law has it, mortal sins destroy the mind of people so that they cannot purely receive Holy Communion. Even St. Paul warned about it: *Therefore anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is answerable for the body and blood of the Lord* (1 Corinthians 11:27). All of us must keep away from sin in order to be worthy to receive the Holy Communion knowing that the receiving of Holy Communion by people who have purity of heart will surely lead to eternal life. May God help all of us Catholics to do what is good at Holy Masses, especially on Sundays and holy days of obligation!

Catholics should go for Sunday Evening Instruction

109. There are other things which we expect every Catholic lay faithful in our Diocese to be doing. Even though some of the matters on Sundays are not laws, it is very helpful and useful to do what the Catholic Church expects Catholics to do. One of the things is Sunday Evening Instruction. In the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, Sunday Evening Instruction is done every Sunday evening at 4.00 pm. The Priests, deacons, catechists and other persons teach important Christian matters to the people with the Sunday Evening Instruction. It is necessary for all the lay faithful to come for the Sunday Evening Instruction in order to learn what will help them to be holy and keep completely the commandments of God and the requirements of the Catholic Church. In fact, the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi presents the themes

of the Sunday Evening instruction in both Weekly Bulletin and The Christian Outlook. Catholics who join in the Sunday Evening Instruction on Sundays will surely gain a lot of knowledge of what they should do to be faithful to God and the Church. They will also have the opportunity to seek for clarification and ask questions for what they need to know in their lives as Catholics. May God help all of us to be faithful by coming on Sundays for the Sunday Evening Instruction!

Benediction on Sundays is very important

110. The Catholic Church also wants Catholics to go for Benediction on Sundays. On Sunday evening Benediction is celebrated in the church. The main aspect of the Benediction is the worship of the Body of Christ, the Blessed Eucharist. Pope St. Paul VI said: The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession (see Paul VI, MF 56; Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 347, no. 1378). Benediction is a very blessed adoration of the Blessed Eucharist. Catholics praise the Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself to us in His Body and the Church blesses us with the Body of Christ. Benediction is also an exposition of the blessed Sacrament. The Catholic Church says: In churches or oratories which are allowed to reserve the blessed Eucharist, there may be exposition, either with ciborium or with the monstrance, in accordance with the norms prescribed in the liturgical books (Canon 941 §1).

Catholics should join in Benediction on Sundays

111. In the Sunday evening, Catholics are expected to join in the rosary and in some churches in the evening prayer. Catholics are expected to go for Benediction on Sundays. Benediction is generally celebrated in the evening. Hymns are said and the Priest or Deacon doing the exposition says this prayer: Thou hast given thy people bread from heaven – (Alleluia) and the people reply: Having all sweetness (Alleluia). The priest or deacon prays: O God, who in this wonderful sacrament has left us a memorial of thy passion; help us so to reverence the sacred mysteries of thy body and blood, that we may experience in

our lives the effects of thy redemption; who lives and reigns for ever and ever. All answer: Amen. The priest or deacon blesses all with the Body of Christ and all say the Divine Praises – Blessed be God; Blessed be His Holy Name; Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man; Blessed be the name of Jesus; Blessed be his most sacred Heart; Blessed be his most Precious Blood; Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar; Blessed be the Holy Spirit the Comforter; Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy; Blessed be her holy and immaculate Conception; Blessed be her glorious Assumption; Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and mother; blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse; Blessed be God in His angels and in His Saints. By participating in Benediction on Sundays, Catholics can gain holiness. May we all join in Benediction on Sundays in order to fill ourselves with the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Love God and all your neighbours

112. Another very important thing for Christians is love of God and love of our neighbours. Jesus Christ gave this command: *If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandment and remain in his love. ... This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. ... My command to you is to love one another* (John 15:10, 12, 17). Love of God is very important for us. But for us to love God we should also love our neighbours. Indeed, Jesus made it clear that Christians should love their fellow men and women no matter what they are doing. Christians should love even those who hate them. Jesus said: *You have heard how it was said, You will love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collector do as much? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Do not even the gentiles do as much? You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his* (Matthew 5:43-48). Loving one another is very important. With faith we should do what the Lord Jesus commanded us: Love your neighbour.

Let us avoid love that causes adultery

113. Of course the love we are talking about is not that which can bring about adultery but love that shows our imitation of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately some people carry on loving people, either male or female with whom they do what is adultery, that is, sexual immorality or vice. As we see in the sixth commandment of God, we should keep away from adultery. We should love people even those who hate us. Even Jesus Christ loved those who caused his crucifixion. After he was crucified Jesus said: *Father, forgive them; they do not what they are doing* (Luke 23:34). As good Christians, we should love all, even those who do bad things to us and those who really hate us. With our faith in God we should do what Jesus Christ told us. In his prayer to the Father, Jesus said: *I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them* (John 17:26). Being in Jesus we should love one another and even those who do bad things to us. We should forgive them and love them as Christ loves us.

Love as charity

114. Another type of love expected from us is charity, love of people in need. Jesus showed the importance of helping people who are poor or in need. A rich man came to Jesus and wanted to know how to achieve eternal life. Jesus mentioned to him some commandments which he should keep and the rich man said that he was keeping those commandments and wanted Jesus to tell him what more he needed to do. Jesus said to him: *If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me*. Unfortunately the rich man did not want to do what Jesus told him and Jesus said: *In truth I tell you, it is hard for someone rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven. Yes, I tell you again, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven* (see Matthew 19:16-24). Indeed, Jesus showed the benefits of those who were helping others and the punishment for those who were not helping others in need. In his message Jesus said that the Son of man would as shepherd divide people like sheep and goats – sheep would be in the right and goats in the left. The King would say to those in the right: *Come, you whom my Father has blessed,*

take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me. When the people in the right said that they never had such things with the King, the King said: *In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.* The King drove away the people in the left because they were not doing good things to those in need, saying: *In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.* Those who were not doing charity to the poor and needy would go away to eternal punishment and those who were doing charity to others in need would be upright to eternal life (see Matthew 25:31-46).

Let us be cheerful givers to the poor and the needy

115. We should be cheerful givers to the poor and needy as St. Paul says: *Each one should give as much as he has decided on his own initiative, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. God is perfectly able to enrich you with every grace, so that you always have enough for every conceivable need, and your resources overflow in all kinds of good work. As scripture says: To the needy he gave without stint, his uprightness stands firm for ever* (2 Corinthians 9:7-9). St. Paul also told rich Christians this: *They are to do good and be rich in good works, generous in giving and always ready to share – this is the way they can amass a good capital sum for the future if they want to possess the only life that is real* (1 Timothy 6:18-19). Let us always be charitable in order to love our brothers and sisters who are poor and needy.

Let us be truly holy

116. What we do as Christians, especially, as Catholics according to the commandments of God, the commandments of Jesus Christ and the laws of the Catholic Church will help us to be holy as long as we respect the commandments and the laws. Doing almsgiving properly, praying as Jesus taught us, participating in Holy Masses especially on Sundays and holy days of obligation, receiving Holy Communion properly, participating in Benediction on Sundays and loving God and

our neighbours will surely provide for Christians, especially Catholics eternal life. Holiness is very necessary in our lives. As Christians, we should always do what will help us to be holy. Indeed, being holy will make us achieve what Jesus Christ said: *Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God* (Matthew 5:8). Let us all Christians do all to make us pure in heart so that we can achieve eternal life by seeing our God.

CONCLUSION

FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS NOBLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS ADMIRABLE – IF ANYTHING IS EXCELLENT OR PRAISEWORTHY – THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS (PHILIPPIANS 4.8)

BUT AS OBEDIENT CHILDREN, BE YOURSELVES HOLY IN ALL YOUR ACTIVITY, AFTER THE MODEL OF THE HOLY ONE WHO CALLED US, SINCE SCRIPTURE SAYS, ‘BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’ (1 PETER 1:15-16)

Be blessed in heart

117. The major matter in this letter to the people of God in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi is the teaching of Jesus Christ who said: *Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God* (Matthew 5:8). To be pure in heart is to keep the commandments of God and do what is upright in as children of God. Those who commit sin are not pure in heart before God. We have seen some of the people in the Old Testament and New Testament who were sinners and therefore had no purity in heart. There were many of them in the Old Testament and New Testament but we took a few. They had no purity in their hearts and they were enemies of God. Those who maintain the will of God and do things according to God’s commandments are people who are pure in heart and can see God by eternal salvation. We have also seen some people in the Old Testament and New Testament who were holy and were in love with God. They were people who followed God and also followed Jesus Christ. In fact, they were received in heaven.

Let us keep away from sins

118. We must also do our best to keep people away from evil and sin knowing that those who commit sin are not pure in heart and cannot see God. People are advised to keep away from sin by keeping the commandments of God. The sins against the ten commandments of God are shown and Christians are begged to avoid any of the sins. The teaching of St. Paul warns against sin: *When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality,*

the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonism and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things. And about these, I tell you now as I have told you in the past, that people who behave in these ways will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21; see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Let us keep away from all sins and make sure that we obey the commandments of God!

Let us be faithful to Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church

119. Again, Christians, especially Catholics are told what to do in order to be followers of God and good children of God. The teaching of Jesus Christ presents good things which the people should do in order to be in love with God. Jesus taught how those following him should do almsgiving, prayers and fasting (see Matthew 6:1-18). Jesus also wanted his followers to love God and love one another (see John 15:12). The Catholic Church has taught people about good things they can do in order to be holy. The Catholic Church has shown us prayers, Mass and Benediction. In doing all the things which Jesus and the Church said, the person should be holy as St. Peter says: *Do not allow yourselves to be shaped by the passions of your old ignorance, but as obedient children, be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the model of the Holy One who calls us, since scripture says, 'Be holy, for I am holy'* (1 Peter 1:14-16). Holiness is very necessary for all baptised Christians. We are required to be truly holy in order to be what Jesus said, that is, to be blessed by being pure in heart. We can see many of the people who had died and had been beatified or canonized by the Catholic Church as holy people after their death.

Imitating the holy persons in the Catholic Church

120. Purity in heart is really holiness and the people who are holy will enjoy the love of God and will eventually enter the kingdom of God. In the Old Testament and New Testament, we have seen people who were pure in heart and had gone over to the kingdom of God. We can see the many people, men and women, young boys and girls who were holy and had entered the kingdom of God as saints and blessed. We shall look at some of the saints and blessed recognized by

the Catholic Church. There are many of them but we will just look at some of them to help us to be also holy in order to join them in the kingdom of God. The Catholic Church has many holy people who had died. The Catholic Church beatifies holy people and eventually canonizes some of them. While the beatified people are Blessed, the canonized people are Saints. On 1st November the Catholic Church celebrates the solemnity of All Saints. There are many Catholics who had been canonized and are saints. There may be holy people in heaven who had not been canonized and they are saints also even though they have not been beatified or canonized by the Catholic Church. Every holy person in heaven is really a saint. However, we can see the holy people whom the Catholic Church had beatified or canonized. These are people who lived holy lives while on earth and now are in the kingdom of God. There are many holy persons whom the Catholic Church had canonized and make their celebrations in the Masses in various ways – in Solemnity, Feast, Memorial and Optional memorial. As Catholics, we should imitate these holy people, either already canonized or beatified.

Seeing some Popes who are Saints canonized by the Catholic Church

121. We can look at the lives of some of these saints to see how they lived in this world and won eternal life in heaven. Then we should imitate them and do all that is necessary for us to be holy, that is, be pure in heart to be able to see God. Some Popes were holy. Let us look at some of the Popes who were saints. Some of Popes who were canonized by the Catholic Church are St. Fabian, Pope and martyr, St. Martin 1, Pope and martyr, St. Pius V, Pope, St. John 1, Pope and martyr, St. Gregory VII, Pope, St. Sixtus II, Pope and martyr, St. Pontian, Pope and martyr, St. Pius X, Pope, St. Cornelius, Pope and martyr, St. Callistus I, Pope and martyr, St. Leo the Great, Pope and doctor of the Church, St. Clement I, Pope and martyr, St. Damasus I, Pope, St. Sylvester I, Pope, St. Fabian, Pope and martyr, St. Pius V, Pope, St. Victor I, Pope and martyr, St. Paul VI, Pope and St. John Paul II, Pope. As we can see, many of the Popes are martyrs. The good news about all these Popes came from their canonization and they must have had purity of heart to be able to see God.

Pope St. John Paul II

122. Pope John Paul II born on May 18, 1920 in Wadowice, Poland was Cardinal Karol Wojtyla when he was elected as Pope on October 16, 1978, and he took up the name of John Paul II. He continued to be Pope till his death on April 2, 2005 at the age of 84 years. He was canonized on 27th April 2014. He was really very holy in all he did. I was in Rome when he was elected as the Pope after the death of Pope John Paul I who died on the night of September 28-29, 1978. We are happy that Pope John Paul II came twice to Nigeria. He was in Nigeria in 1982 arriving at Lagos on February 8, 1982 after the Nigerian Bishops went to Rome for *ad limina* on January 21, 1982. He also came to Nigeria in 1998 to beatify Father Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi who is now Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi who died in 1964. There is sometime very wonderful that is said about Pope John Paul II when he came to Nigeria: John Paul refused to concede Africa's marginality or hopelessness. In March 1998, he flew to Nigeria, vigorously denounced the human rights abuses, authoritarianism, and corruption of the country's military junta, and beatified Nigeria's candidate for sainthood, Father Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, who had been the teacher of Francis Cardinal Arinze and had died in 1964. More than a million Nigerians attended the beatification ceremony in Oba, held in sweltering heat. Mass was celebrated in English, with different parts sung in Igbo, Efik, Hausa, Edo, and Yoruba. John Paul II, insisting in his homily that "Christ is ... a part of the history of your own nation on this continent of Africa," challenged the Nigerians to build a very different kind of society from the one in which they were living. He urged people to do justice as *Justice is not complete without love of neighbour* (WITNESS TO HOPE, THE BIOGRAPHY OF POE JOHN PAUL II, BI GEORGE WEIGEL, pp. 772-773).

Some of the Bishops who are saints

123. The bishops who are saints are many. Some of those canonized by the Catholic Church are: St. Basil the Great, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Gregory Nazianzen, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Hilary, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Blaise. Bishop and martyr, St. Ansgar, Bishop, St. Methodius, Bishop, St. Peter Damian,

Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Polycarp, Bishop and martyr, St. Patrick, Bishop, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Turibius de Mongrovejo, Bishop, St. Isidore, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Stanislaus, Bishop and martyr, St. Anselm, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Athanasius, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop, St. Boniface, Bishop and martyr, St. Norbert, Bishop, St. Paulinus of Nola, Bishop, St. John Fisher, Bishop and martyr, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Irenaeus, Bishop and martyr, St. Bonaventure, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Peter Chrysologus, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. John Chrysostom, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Robert Bellarmine, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Januarius, Bishop and martyr, St. Denis, Bishop and martyr, St. Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and martyr, St. Anthony Claret, Bishop, St. Charles Borromeo, Bishop. St. Martin of Tours, Bishop, St. Josaphat, Bishop and martyr, St. Albert the Great, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Nicholas, Bishop, St. Ambrose, Bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Thomas a Becket, Bishop and martyr, St. Alexander of Alexandria, Bishop, St. Zeno of Verona, Bishop, St. Marcellinus, Bishop, St. Justin De Jacobis, Bishop, and St. Daniel Comboni, Bishop. Many of these Bishops were martyrs while many were doctors of the Church. We can learn a lot from them so that we can be also holy as they were on earth and are now in the kingdom of heaven with our God.

There are priests who are saints

124. Let us see some of the priests who were canonized for their holiness of life. They are: St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest, St. John Bosco, priest, St. Vincent Ferrer, priest, St. John Baptist de Salle, priest, St. Lidelis of Sigmaringen, priest and martyr, St. Peter Chanel, priest and martyr, St. Bernardine of Siena, priest, St. Bede the Venerable, priest and doctor of the Church, St. Philip Neri, priest, St. Anthony of Padua, priest and doctor of the Church, St. Anthony Zachariah priest, St. Camillus de Lellis, priest, St. Lawrence of Brindisi, priest and doctor of the Church, St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest, St. John Vianney, priest, St. Cajetan, priest, St. Dominic, priest, St. Hippolytus, priest and martyr, St. John Eudes, priest, St. Joseph Calasanz, priest, St. Vincent de Paul, priest, St. Jerome, priest and doctor

of the Church, St. Bruno, priest, St. John Leonardi, priest, St. Isaac Jogues, priest and martyr, St. Paul of the Cross, priest, St. John of Capistrano, priest, St. Francis Xavier, priest, St. John of the Cross, priest and doctor of the Church, St. Peter Canisius, priest and doctor of the Church, and St. John of Kansty, priest. These priests are people who lived holy life and had been canonized by the Catholic Church because of their holiness of life. We can learn from them how to live the holy life for people with purity of heart.

Some Deacons, Abbots, Monks, Hermits, Virgins and Religious who are saints

125. Let us see some deacons who are saints. The following are deacons: St. Vincent, deacon and martyr, St. Ephrem, deacon and doctor of the Church, St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr, and St. Francis of Assisi, deacon and religious.

We can see some abbots, monks and hermits who are saints. They are: St. Anthony, abbot, St. Adrian of Canterbury, Abbot, St. Cyril, monk, St. Romuald, abbot, St. Benedict, abbot, St. Bernard, abbot and doctor of the Church, St. Columban, abbot, and St. Francis of Paola, hermit.

The Catholic Church has some virgins who were canonized. They are: St. Agnes, virgin and martyr, St. Angela Merici, virgin, St. Agatha, virgin and martyr, St. Schoastica, virgin, St. Catherine of Siena, virgin and doctor of the Church, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, virgin, St. Maria Goretti, virgin and martyr, St. Clare, virgin, St. Rose of Lima, virgin, St. Teresa of Avila, virgin and doctor of the Church, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, virgin, St. Gertrude, virgin, St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, virgin and doctor of the Church, and St. Lucy, virgin and martyr.

We have also religious who were canonized. They are: St. John of God, religious, St. Frances of Rome, religious, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious, St. Bridget, religious, St. Hedwig, religious, St. Martin de Porres, Religious, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious, St. Bachita, religious and St. Jane Frances de Chantal, religious. Another holy religious is saint Teresa of Calcutta who was canonized on September 4, 2016 by Pope Francis at Saint Peter's Square, Vatican City.

Saints who were martyrs

126. There are saints who are just martyrs and some who have no clear description for them. The martyrs are: St. Sebastian, martyr, St. George, martyr, St. Nereus, martyr, St. Achilleus, martyr, St. Pancras, martyr, St. Justin, martyr, St. Marcellinus, martyr, St. Peter, martyr, St. Charles and companions, martyrs, St. Thomas More, martyr, St. Cosmas, martyr, St. Damian, martyr, St. Sebastin, martyr, St. Maurine, martyr, St. Mary Kim Taegon, Martyr, St. Andrew Dug-Lac, martyr, St. Charles Luwanga, martyr, St. Mulumba, martyr and St. Wenceslaus, martyr. These martyrs have no other titles.

Some of the Blessed holy people

127. There are some holy people who were beatified by the Catholic Church. They are the Blessed and some of the Blessed are: Blessed John Gerard, Priest, Blessed Isidore Bakanja, martyr, Blessed Victoria Rasoamanarivo, martyr, Blessed Daudi Okelo, martyr, Blessed Jildo Irwa, martyr, Blessed Clementine Anuarite, virgin and martyr, Blessed Maria Ines (Foundress of the Claresan Missionary Sisters who visited Nigeria several times), Blessed Paolo Mann (Founder of the PMU), and Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, Priest and monk, Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi was an Igbo man, born in September 1903 at Aguleri and he was ordained a Priest on 19th December 1937. He worked as a Priest at Nnewi, Dunukofia, Akpu/Ajalli and Aguleri before he went to England. Before he left for England, he was in Lagos with the person who later became the King of Ossomala – His Royal Highness, Igwe of Ossomala Robert R. Olisa, the Atamanya Nzedegwu II of Ossomala. Before he left Lagos in 1950 he gave Robert Olisa his soutane to burn as he was no longer to wear it. Robert Olisa did not burn the soutane because he believed that the man was a very holy man. In England the man who later Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi became a monk at Mount Saint Bernard Monastery, England. He was very good in every place he was. He died on 20th January 1964. When I became the parish priest in Ossomala, Igwe Robert Olisa told me that Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi was a very holy man and he gave me his soutane to take to the Archbishop so that he would be made a saint. I arranged for him to go to the Archbishop and he did. After the death of Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, I was one of the people who went to

England to bring the dead monk back to Onitsha Archdiocese. He was brought back to the Archdiocese of Onitsha where he was buried. I was one of the people who prepared him for beatification. Indeed, he was beatified at Oba in the Archdiocese of Onitsha on 22nd March 1998 by Pope John Paul II, now St. John Paul II. Pope John Paul II said about him: “Blessed Cyprian Michael Tansi is a prime example of the fruits of holiness which have grown and matured in the Church since the Gospel was first preached in this land. He received the gift of faith through the efforts of the missionaries, and, taking the Christian way of life as his own, he made it truly African and Nigerian”. We are praying that he will be canonized so that he will be Saint Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, the first canonized Saint in West Africa.

Let us imitate our brothers and sisters who are Saints and Blessed

128. As Christians, especially as Catholics, we have to imitate our brothers and sisters who lived good Christian lives and died and were beatified or canonized as holy people. Those beatified are Blessed while those canonized are saints. We need to look at them and learn from them how to be holy so that we can also be like them and gain eternal life in heaven. They had really purity of heart and that is how they were able to see God in heaven. My brothers and sisters, let us keep away from sin. We have seen that sins contradict the commandments of God. Jesus Christ said: *Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven* (Matthew 5:19). Keeping the commandments of God makes us pure in heart and it will bring us to the kingdom of God. So, let us do good so that we can be pure in heart and therefore be able to see God. Seeing God is eternal salvation. So let us do what will grant us what Jesus Christ said, that is, *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God*. In doing that we can be holy and gain eternal life. May we keep always living according to the faith in God so that we will surely achieve eternity of life with God! Amen.

Given at the Bishop's House on 10th February, 2022, at the 20th Anniversary of the Canonical Erection of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi and of Episcopal Ordination Installation of Most Rev. Hilary Paul Odili Okeke as the first Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi!

Most Rev. Hilary Paul Odili Okeke
Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi