

# community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

01/2024/EN



## Motto 2024: Prayer works!

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New Apostolic Church  
International



# Prayer works!

Dear brothers and sisters,

Regardless of what we go through, there is a source of strength that is often underestimated: our personal prayer! We can be confident that our prayers are heard and will have an effect.

And that is our motto for 2024: Prayer works!

As always, our example in this is Jesus Christ. He had intimate conversations with His Father. He prayed for His own and still intercedes for us today. His prayers are just as effective today. This gives us comfort and confidence also for the coming year.

What are the effects of prayer?

- Prayer makes us grateful.
- Prayer makes us compassionate.
- Prayer makes us strong.
- Prayer sanctifies us.
- Prayer unites us.

In order for our prayer to be effective, we should pray as Jesus teaches us.



■ New Apostolic Church International

On the one hand, we should pray always and sincerely. On the other hand, we should ask in the name of Jesus, meaning that we should focus on our eternal salvation.

Let us also pray collectively in the congregation, in our families, and as a couple.

I wish everyone a blessed year 2024 and an invigorating prayer life.

Heartfelt greetings

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'S'.

Jean-Luc Schneider

# The Father, the children, and the whole family



New Apostolic Church Canada



Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider visited the congregation of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, on 18 June 2023

1 John 3: 1

*“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”*

Dear brothers and sisters, it is a great joy to experience this divine service in your midst. I am really glad for the congregation that we can be together here in your church. I am sure that we will experience the power of the Holy Spirit also today. As far as I am concerned, the congregation is certainly a bit smaller than last Sunday. We are a few thousand less than in Zambia. But don't worry. The power of the Holy Spirit is not dependent on the number of listeners and the number of loudspeakers.

The power of the Holy Spirit is the power of God to address each individual and deliver a personal message to them. Whether there are two or twenty thousand people, the power of the Holy Spirit is the same. He will address every single one in his or her situation, tell them what God

expects of them, and give them the strength they need to carry it out. This is the power of the Holy Spirit. I am quite sure that we will experience this power today.

Today we have a Bible text from the first epistle of John. It is a special letter; actually it is a kind of warning to the believers of that time against false teachers. The Bible does not explain exactly what this is about. It seems that there were false teachers who did not believe in the divine nature of Jesus Christ. The Apostles and their co-workers had to fight against these false teachings. We don't know what exactly this was about because these people simply disappeared again after a while, and today we don't even know exactly what their teaching was about. That is actually a good lesson too. Nobody knows what it was really about, but the true gospel endured.

What this means for us today is quite simple to explain. Even today there are many people who want to explain to us what the gospel teaches and how we should understand it. But we are New Apostolic Christians and we believe that God sent His Apostles to preach the gospel in the proper manner. This is what we believe. That is why we follow the preaching of the Apostles—in order to be prepared for the return of Christ. We don't need to discuss that. That makes it easy.

At that time the point was the nature of Jesus Christ. These people did not accept all the messages of Jesus Christ, and one of the most important messages of Jesus Christ was that He revealed God as the Father. Conversely, we can say that God revealed Himself as Father through Jesus Christ. The Jews had a different understanding of God. When Jesus came, He told them, “No, God is your heavenly Father.”

I know that when I say this I get an immediate reaction, “Does that mean God is a man?”

No. God is not male, He is not female. He is far above human nature. The psalmist says that God takes care of us as a father and as a mother.

God is the Father of all of humankind because He created them and He has authority over His creation and those He created. That is the first thought. He is the Father because He is the author of life.

Jesus also referred to God as our Father because all human beings can talk to Him as to a father. Jesus explained to

the people that God knew what they needed and provided for them. God cares for all human beings. All people can address God as their Father. Jesus said that God makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5: 45). He is the Father of all of humankind. This is something very important and Jesus went on to explain even more.

He described God as the loving Father who is full of compassion for sinful humankind. You know the story. Man was created to live in fellowship with God. Adam and Eve decided to leave God. They distanced themselves from Him. God is the loving Father who is full of compassion. He wants all human beings to return to Him. Paul says that God is waiting for all to return—those who are far away and those who are close to Him—in order to save them. This is the Father.

God is the Father of all human beings. But those who do not believe, who—as it says in our Bible text—do not know Him, who have not accepted Jesus, those who misunderstand the message of Jesus, have a different understanding of God and of human beings. For some Christians, God is the judge who is waiting for the Last Judgement to punish all these awful sinners. Strangely enough many Christians still believe this. They have forgotten the message of Jesus Christ, who describes God as the loving Father who wants to save all of humankind.

Jesus described God as the loving Father. Many Christians to this day have a distorted image of God and treat Him like an idol. They think one can buy God. They think if you bring enough offerings, if you do the right things then you can buy His grace and His blessing. “If you are kind to God, He will be kind to you. And if you are not kind to God, He will not be kind to you.” They treat him like an idol. They bring their offerings and say, “I am obedient so be good to me.” That is not the idea of God, the loving Father. That is something different.

Others—even among Christians—see God as the great king who has to rule the world and fix the problems in this world and society. Some even think they have been called to help God with this. They want to rule the world in His name and on His behalf, like the king of Israel in the Old Testament.

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.’ What God wants is to save you, to deliver you from this world. But it is not God’s job to rule the world. He is not interested in this.”

## *God is the Father of all of humankind*

God is our loving Father. He loves humankind. He wants to save all human beings and His salvation means eternal life.

Those who do not really believe in Jesus Christ or have misunderstood His message also think that God is very selective in His love and that He loves some more than others—that He has His preferences which are based on origin, behaviour, religion, and belief. That is not true! Definitely not. All human beings are children of God and He loves them all with the same love. He wants them all to be with Him in eternity.

That does not mean that all human beings benefit from His love. That is something else because they have to do something to benefit from God's love. God treats everyone the same. He loves everyone, the sinners as well as the just. He loves them with the same love. He is the Father and we are His children.

People sometimes believe that poverty or wealth signifies whether God loves a person. That is also nonsense! God loves all His children with the same love. Even if they do not behave, He will not punish them. If you are poor it does not mean that God has rejected you. And if you are rich it does not mean that you are blessed by God. Sometimes it is quite the contrary, by the way. But that is another story.

We must be aware that all human beings are children of God and that it is not His will to punish them or to condemn sinners. Because sometimes people assume the right that they have been commissioned by God to punish

sinners and condemn those who are not as they should be. They want to act in the name of God to punish and condemn sinners.

This is definitely not according to the will of God! He is the Father of all human beings and He loves them all. He wants to save them, not punish them. Already the image of the Father and His children has great significance. It must, however, be understood in the light of Jesus Christ and then it becomes clear. Those who have not understood the message of Jesus Christ definitely have a wrong understanding of it.

The term "child of God" also has a spiritual dimension: children of God are those who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit. They have become co-heirs with Jesus Christ and will inherit eternal life. This is the other dimension of what children of God are. Children of God are those who have received the sacraments, who believe in the proper proclamation of the gospel, and who align their lives with the return of Christ.

## *God loves all His children with the same love*

But being a child of God and inheriting eternal life is not just a question of having received the sacraments. Because being a child of God means that one has received all the sacraments, believes in the proper proclamation of the gospel, and aligns one's life with the return of Christ. That is a true child of God. The Bible says that true children of God bear the name of the Father and the Son and keep His name holy by their conduct. They practise justice and Christian love. True children of God trust their Father no





matter what happens. Paul said, “Abba, Father,” with which he wanted to say, “God, you are my Father, I trust in you!” That is what it means to be a true child of God.

Such a child of God lives in freedom. What does that mean? The Bible says that those who are led by the Holy Spirit are children of God. They are free. This freedom of God’s children—and I insist on this point—means they are led by the Holy Spirit and not driven by their human nature. Their behaviour is not dictated by their needs. Their behaviour is not dictated by the situation they live in, by their wealth or their poverty. Their behaviour, their opinion, is not dictated by the mainstream and social media. A child of God says: “People can say what they want. They can do whatever they want. The situation may be what it is. But these things will not decide how I should behave.”

Children of God are guided by the Holy Spirit; what they do, think, and what they say is determined by their faith, which becomes active in love. That is the liberty of God’s children. Their behaviour, their feelings are determined by only one thing, their faith, which tells them: “I am a child of God. God is my Father. He loves me. He wants to have eternal fellowship with me in His kingdom. That is where I want to be.” That is the freedom of the children of God.

Again, we need to understand the message of Jesus Christ to understand what it means to be a child of God. Because the evil one will come and say—and he always has the same strategy—“If you are a child of God then ...” He comes to us in the same manner he came to Jesus: “If you are the beloved Son of God, you should not suffer.” He incites us to doubt in our childhood in God by saying, “How can you believe you are a child of God? He is supposed to love you, be your Father, and you have to go through such a difficult situation? Look around you. They all have more money, they are healthy, and you are sick. They are happy and you have a lot of problems,” and so on. You know this spirit.

But those who know Jesus Christ know that He is the Son of God and that God loved Him. In spite of God’s love for Him, He had to suffer and was persecuted. So being a beloved child of God does not mean being spared from suffering. That has nothing to do with it. Being a child of God means having the opportunity to enter the kingdom of God and inheriting eternal life. It has nothing to do with being spared from suffering and being blessed in all earthly matters.

Those who know Jesus Christ know what it means to be a child of God. They look at Jesus and consider what



happened to Him and know: “Okay, that’s normal for it to happen to me too.”

True children of God also know that there is nothing more important in their life than their childhood in God. The evil one, the enemy of Jesus Christ, wants to destroy that. He wants us to think that our earthly life is much more important than our divine childhood. He wants us to think that our opinions and our thoughts are more important and that we are entitled to certain things in life.

But a child of God knows: “No, my childhood in God is more important than my earthly life. This is not about my person, my ideas, my opinions, and my rights. I have the right to enter the kingdom of God as a firstling. I want to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ and that is the most important thing for me. Being a child of God is more important to me than doing my own thing.” Do you understand what I mean? Our childhood in God is more important than our earthly life. Jesus Christ has given us the example. For Him, being the Son of God, being sent by God, meant much more than being Jesus of Nazareth. The same is true for us.

God wants to gather His children and lead them into His kingdom. He wants His children to be one and to overcome their differences. The place where they can overcome their differences is the church. This is the will of God, the will of Jesus Christ. “Yes, you are all completely different, but

I want you to become one, and the place where you can overcome your differences is the Church.”

And here we have a problem in today’s society because people today tend to insist on their differences. Everyone wants to define themselves by their otherness. “I am different. I belong to this group, to these people. This is just the way I am. I am different and you have to respect my otherness. And because I am different I have this and that right,” and so on. I often wonder, how are you going to build a society on such divisions? Do you not realise that the only aim of this spirit is to divide more and more? No wonder it is almost impossible to create unity in this society. No wonder this society is increasingly divided and people are more and more selfish. Would it not be better for people to focus on what they have in common instead of on their differences?

As Chief Apostle I am—thank God—not responsible for society. But brothers and sisters, let us think about this for a moment. What is the spirit behind all these things? It is the spirit of division. The more groups there are—each one so important and so different—the more divided society will become and the more selfishness there will be in the world.

Back to the church. What’s important for us are not our differences, are not our opinions. God wants us to be one. Paul said that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. We have no idea what that meant for society at the time. For us



Apostle Jonathan Karl Sturm



District Apostle Rüdiger Krause

these are just two words: Greeks and Jews. For the people then that meant a lot. If one looks at this topic a little deeper you realise that there were really two worlds, extremely different. And Paul said: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3: 28).

This meant a lot in that society. You cannot imagine what all these words meant for the people at that time. For us it is just a figure of speech, but please take a closer look at the historical and social context of what it meant at that time to be Greek or Jewish, to be a free man or a slave.

And Paul says that in the church, in Christ, there are no more differences. “What we have in common is much more important than what divides us,” Chief Apostle Schneider pointed out. Let us put our opinions aside and be transformed into the image of Christ. Our calling is more important than our rights. Our mission is more important than all the advantages we could have, and so on.

My dear brothers and sisters, we are children of God. God wants His family, His children, to be one. The place where we can overcome our differences is the church, and with the help of the Holy Spirit we can do that and truly be one in Jesus Christ—and that is our goal.

The message is clear: God is our loving Father, He cares for us. Don't worry, He knows exactly what you need and

will take care of you. Please accept that your neighbour is also a child of God and that God loves him or her as much as He loves you; and accept that He makes absolutely no difference. Nobody can rule the world in the name of God. Nobody can fight sinners and condemn them in the name of God. God is the loving Father of all human beings.

We are children of God because we have received all the sacraments. We believe in the proper proclamation of the gospel. Let us focus on the return of Jesus Christ and align our lives with it. Yes, we bear the name of the Father and the Son and do all we can to keep it sacred by practising justice and love. We are children of God and want to be one in Christ. With His help we can overcome all differences.

## CORE THOUGHTS

God is the Father of all humankind. He loves all human beings with the same love and wants to save them. All those who are reborn out of water and the Spirit and whose focus in life is the return of Christ will inherit eternal life. Let us make our childhood in God and the unity of the Church a matter of priority.





NAC Canada

# Election and calling to ministry

The questions of what and who of our concept of ministry have been resolved. What remains is the question, why does ministry come to the believer. This is what Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider explains in the following essay.

The Fifth Article of the New Apostolic Creed states: “I believe that those designated by God for a ministry are ordained only by Apostles, and that authority, blessing, and sanctification for their ministrations come forth out of the Apostle ministry.” In the commentary on this Article of Faith, the Catechism further specifies that

- the ministry is not a human work, nor is it ultimately that of the congregation; it is a gift of God to His church.
- it is God Himself who designates a person to receive a ministry.
- this designation by God is realised on the occasion of an ordination which is performed by the apostolate (CNAC 2.4.5).

## Maintaining and strengthening belief

Belief in the divine election of the ministries is part of the wealth of our Church. It is a source of motivation and strength for the ministers. At the same time, it contributes to the acceptance of the spiritual ministry on the part of the congregation.

We are accustomed to saying that it is God who designates a person before the ordination, and that this designation comes to expression in the Apostle’s decision to ordain the person. It must be acknowledged, however, that this explanation falls somewhat short, considering the importance of the subject.

Certain conditions might cause our members to call the divine designation of a minister into question. This can be the case, for example, when it turns out that ministers do not live up to the demands of their ministry or fail in its exercise.

In most cases the selection of the ministers to be ordained transpires as follows:

- the locally responsible ministers provide the Apostle with a list of brothers or sisters proposed for ordination.
- on the basis of these proposals, the Apostle (or District Apostle) chooses the brothers or sisters to be ordained.
- a locally responsible minister contacts the members who have been selected, and explains what will be expected of them.
- if the individuals selected give their consent, the Apostle ordains them into ministry.

It is not necessarily easy to reconcile this administrative procedure with a designation made by God. For this reason, it seems to me that it would be helpful to provide

some explanation of the concepts of divine designation and calling to a ministry.

## Divine designation

As with all decisions made by God, the divine designation to a ministry is a mystery which we can only grasp in faith. No Apostle can claim to fully understand why God has chosen a believer in order to entrust him or her with a special duty. Our task merely consists of recognising His will and acting in accordance with it (CNAC 7.7).

In order to determine which believers are called to a ministry by God, we must take the following into consideration.

**The needs of the Church:** Ministry is not an end unto itself. It is given by God in order to meet the needs of His church. The Apostle and His co-workers must allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit in order to recognise the needs and expectations of the congregation.

**The spiritual gifts:** God gives those whom He has designated for a ministry the spiritual gifts that will be necessary for the exercise of the ministry. Believers who have been called to a ministry can be recognised by

- their faith in Jesus Christ, as well as in His death, resurrection, and return.
- their faithfulness to the gospel.
- their faith in the Church as a mediator of salvation; their faith in the Apostles, in the sacraments, and in the ministry.
- their love for God and the believers.
- their willingness to serve.

**Human abilities:** The designation that issues from God also shows itself in the abilities He has bestowed upon the believers in question. Some examples of this include the ability to listen, the capacity for dialogue, the ability to express themselves clearly, open-mindedness, common sense, knowledge, or the ability and willingness to learn. The Apostles and their co-workers must make certain that even the human—that is, the characteristic, emotional, and intellectual—abilities of the minister correspond to the needs of the congregation which he or she has been called to serve.

**Acceptance on the part of the congregation:** Ministry is a gift that God gives to the congregation. He chooses ministers who correspond to the believers they are to serve. The Apostle must make certain that the person to be ordained

will be well accepted by the congregation. In the early church, the Apostles asked the church to seek out seven men who were to be ordained to serve as Deacons (Acts 6: 1–6). In our time, this decision falls to the locally responsible congregational or district rectors, who act on behalf of the congregation. By presenting their proposal to the Apostle, these leading ministers confirm that the believing congregation has recognised (or perhaps, will be able to recognise) the spiritual gifts and abilities of those whose ordination they propose.

The minister's own acceptance of the calling: The divine designation always goes hand in hand with a calling. God calls the individuals whom He has selected and gives them the opportunity to accept their election or not. We are of the conviction that this calling is disclosed to the believer by the Apostle or, if necessary, by his or her representative. However, this is surely not the only way for God to call a believer into His service.

The divine calling also expresses itself in the personal development of the individuals who have been called. Through the conditions of life and personal experiences, God awakens the following in their hearts:

- gratitude for the gifts and favours they have received.
- love for God and the Church.
- the genuine desire—born out of this gratitude and love—to serve God and the Church.

## Confirming one's designation and calling

It is the link between the feeling of an inner calling and the call of the apostolate that allows believers to arrive at the certainty that they have been called by God to a ministry. The individuals who have been called must then confirm their designation and calling (2 Peter 1: 10) by declaring, of their own free will, that they

- profess the New Apostolic Creed.
- will discharge their ministry within the mandate issued to them.
- will work together with the apostolate and the other ministries.
- will adhere to the regulations and ordinances of the New Apostolic Church.

It is important for the individuals who have been called to be able to make their decision freely and in full awareness of the significance of the matter. Those who have been called must be clear about the content of their obligation

and what implications arise from this obligation. For this reason, it is important that the spouse also be incorporated into the decision-making process.

After their ordination, the ministers must further consolidate their election by

- sanctifying themselves.
- making the endeavour to recognise the divine will and act in accordance with it.
- deepening their oneness with the apostolate and the other ministries.
- further developing their gifts and abilities.
- committing themselves to training in order to acquire the knowledge and abilities that are necessary for the exercise of their ministry.

The Church leadership in turn must see to it that the ministers are instructed and supported in their ministry. Meanwhile, the members of the congregation must support the ministers in prayer, but also demonstrate their appreciation for them and solidarity with them.

## Designation is no guarantee of success

The designation by God, which is realised by ordination, does not rule out the possibility that a minister may fail in the exercise of his or her ministry. "Nevertheless, this does not call into question the original call of God" (CNAC 2.4.5).

Here the Catechism makes a distinction between God, who is perfect and infallible, and the person who, although designated by God, remains imperfect and fallible.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, let us clarify right from the start what we mean when we talk about failing in the exercise of ministry. The failure of which we speak here does not refer to the results achieved, but rather to the manner in which the minister fulfils the divine will.

There can be various reasons which might prevent a minister from fulfilling his or her ministerial mandate.

Failure attributable to the minister: Ministers cannot be successful in the exercise of their ministry if they

- conduct themselves in a manner that is inconsistent with their ministry.
- are not in oneness with the apostolate.
- lose the trust of the members through their conduct.



- refuse to place their gifts and strength into the service of the Church.

In all of these cases, the ministers deprive themselves of divine blessing, and their actions are therefore doomed to fail. Nevertheless, the acts which they have performed within the scope of their ministerial authority (dispensation of the sacraments, proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, dispensation of blessings) are not called into question as a result of their conduct. They remain valid and can unfold in all their effects.

Failure attributable to the congregation: Human weaknesses can cause members of the congregation to have an intolerant or even hostile attitude toward a minister. From this point onward such a minister will no longer be able to fulfil his or her mandate with them. Such a failure is then attributable to the congregation, and not to the minister.

Also Apostles are imperfect human beings, who are capable of making mistakes. If it turns out that a brother or sister fails to live up to their ministry despite their best efforts, the Apostle must have the honesty to question him- or herself. Perhaps an error was made in assessing the needs of the congregation or the abilities of the minister. It is the obligation of the Apostle to support this minister, if necessary, by adapting the mandate to suit his or her abilities, and to see to it that the minister and his or her family receive the appropriate pastoral care.

Failure attributable to external circumstances: In some cases, events occur after a person's ordination which make it difficult or even impossible for him or her to exercise the ministry. For example, this is the case when

- ministers experience health problems or significant changes in their family or professional life.
- the composition of the congregation has changed so significantly that the requirements are different.
- demographic developments oblige the Church to change the way congregations are organised.

Such changes do not call God's calling into question, but must cause us to ask ourselves the question of

- what God expects of us now.
- what is to be done in order to ensure that the ministers can indeed exercise their ministerial authority in accordance with the will of God.
- whether the ministerial mandate of the minister needs to be adapted.
- whether the time has come to relieve the minister of his or her ministerial mandate.

The exercise of a ministry is no guarantee of salvation, and the fact that a minister may have failed in his or her ministry does not exclude him or her from having access to salvation. Our duty toward him or her remains unchanged, namely to help them attain salvation. It is not the task of the Apostles to judge those who refuse to accept a ministry. Finally, Apostles must not forget that ministers who have difficulties in the exercise of their ministries need special comfort and support.