

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER – YEAR B
Acts 3:13-15.17-19ab; Psalm 4:2.4.7.9; 1John 2:1-5a; Luke 24:35-48

WITNESSING TO THE RISEN CHRIST

“Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words” – St. Francis of Assisi

One early morning, as some pupils arrived at the school they started plucking the mangoes with stones and branches of trees. Unfortunately, one of those stones mistakenly fell on the head of one of the teachers and blood gushed out. Immediately, he was taken to hospital, while another teacher, Mr. Victor, tried to identify the culprit. All the pupils denied it. Suddenly, out of jealousy, Michelle said, “Flavio is the culprit.” Immediately, Mr. Victor sent for him.

Meanwhile, Flavio and some of his colleagues were quietly waiting in the Assembly Hall. Suddenly, a group of their schoolmates rounded him up saying, “Your attention is needed by Mr. Victor.” Unsuspectingly, Flavio went to see him. Surprisingly, they started chanting a ‘war song,’ “You wanted to kill our teacher, we would rather kill you today.” The entire pupils of the school and even teachers joined the mob. Unfortunately, nobody gave Flavio a listening ear.

So, Zito, one of his colleagues who was with him, cried out, “Leave him alone he is innocent, we were together. As you know, the culprit was supposed to be among those who were in the vicinity of that mango tree.” Immediately, one of the teachers hushed him down, saying, “Keep quiet there!” Zito retorted, “I am a living witness that Flavio isn’t the culprit because we arrived at the same time and since then we’ve been chatting together and he didn’t do any of such.”

My dear brothers and sisters, after Christ’s resurrection, he said to his Apostles, “You are witnesses to these things (Lk.24:48). Which things? The things that he did right from the beginning of his mission, his death to his resurrection. Similarly, Zito bore witness to his colleague, Flavio because he was with him all through since their arrival to school. Therefore, bearing witness to someone is confirming its veracity based on knowledge.

Certainly, the Apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ because they had first-hand experience from their relationship with him. They worked, travelled, chatted, and experienced good and bad moments with him for three years. They had all it took to be his witnesses. Hence, bearing witness to Christ is to be Christ-like, in words and deeds. For example, in the first reading, St. Peter led the Apostles in bearing witness to Jesus verbally (Acts 3:15).

On the other hand, the apostles also bore witness to Christ through their exemplary lifestyle of love for one another. Their good behaviour is what gave rise to the name we have today. People observed that they were compassionate and loving like their master, Jesus and instinctively they commented, “These people are behaving like Christ, they are Christ-like.” Thus, the birth of a nickname, ‘Christian’ which later became the name for the followers of Jesus. And it happened in a place called Antioch (Acts 11:26)

Essentially, we are called to know the truth, profess the truth, live the truth, defend the truth and if need be, die for the truth, just like Jesus Christ bore witness to the truth by his passion and death. And overcoming death through his resurrection he proved that truth cannot be killed. He went on to strengthen us when he said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul (Mt.10:28). Therefore, being a witness of Christ demands standing by the truth even if it means standing alone and suffering for it.

After his resurrection, Jesus Christ mandated all his Apostles to bear witness to him (Acts 1:8; Mt.28:18-20) All saints witnessed to Christ, how about you? You witness to him when you speak the truth, when you are honest, when you are merciful, when you defend the persecuted as Zito did above, etc. Remember his promise, “Anyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my father, who is in heaven” (Mt.10:32).

Grant that by imitating our risen Lord, Jesus Christ, we may be his witnesses in words and deeds, Amen.

HAPPY SUNDAY OF EASTER
Nicholas Ikpeme, CM
Witnessers’ Homilies (Mt.10:32)