



Spiritual portion DAM, ACCRA November 2024

Dear District Apostles and District Apostle Helpers,

For several weeks now, the “Liturgy of the New Apostolic Church” and the “Guide for Ministers” have been available online on the Church website “nak.org”. We have taken this initiative because we are convinced that it will help strengthen the unity of the Church. It also aims to show the public that our Church has clear and precise rules, along with a well-defined liturgy. And to thereby create a positive image of the Church. Initial reactions from our members have been very positive. This is especially true in Africa, where—thanks to the widespread use of the internet—many of our members can now access information and documents they did not have before.

The publication of the “Liturgy of the New Apostolic Church” gives me an opportunity to discuss the final benediction with you. I have the impression that the importance of this element of the liturgy is not always well understood.

The final benediction is pronounced over the congregation with the words recorded in 2 Corinthians 13: 14:

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!”*

What is the meaning and scope of these words?

More than a formula—a blessing!

The officiant pronounces these words to mark the end of the act of worship. The wording of the verse suggests a wish. One might be tempted to think that the officiant is merely wishing for grace, love, and communion to accompany the believers, just as he might wish them a safe journey home. In reality, it is much more than that. When pronounced by a minister mandated by God for this purpose, these words constitute a true blessing. They are filled with divine power, and they impart a spiritual benefit to the listener.

In this blessing, God promises the hearers that His grace, love, and fellowship will accompany them in their daily lives. And because God does everything He says He will do, the congregation has the assurance that this will indeed be the case. This promise is given to all who hear it. But, as with every blessing, its effect will depend on the faith and conduct of the one who receives it.

Therefore, the final blessing is both a promise and an exhortation from God.

A Trinitarian blessing

The passage in 2 Corinthians 13: 14 makes clear reference to the Trinity. Let us recall here that God is both one and triune. Each of the divine persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is true God. The divine persons are distinct from each other but are only one God.

It is in this context that the final benediction must be understood. It is God the One, God the Almighty, and God the Perfect One, who is speaking. The actions of God are always the actions of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Grace, love, and communion are therefore not linked respectively to each of the divine persons, but are common to all three. One might just as well say that the Father grants grace, that the Son offers communion, and that the Spirit is love.



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The grace of Jesus Christ

With these words, God reminds us of the grace he has given us in Jesus Christ: He has chosen us and made us His children, joint heirs of His glory (Ephesians 1: 3–14). He has forgiven us our sins. Moreover, it is to His grace, rather than our merits, that we owe what we possess.

By concluding our encounter with Him with this blessing, God guarantees that

- we will remain His children, no matter what happens—He will never call our election into question;
- we will always be able to count on Christ to defend us against the accusations of the evil one (Romans 8: 34);
- we can hope in His grace—it is this grace that will allow us to attain the perfection required to enter into His kingdom (1 Peter 1: 13).

However, this guarantee only applies to those who adopt a behaviour that is pleasing to God. God encourages us to

- remain humble before God, as we depend entirely on His grace, and before others, as we are all sinners;
- behave ourselves like true children of God who are called to inherit His glory;
- use the gifts we have received from Him in the service of others (1 Peter 4: 10).

The love of God

Before we go home, God declares His love for us once again. Everything He does is to enable us to be with Him forever. He will remove from our path any obstacle that could prevent our salvation. He will give us what we need in order to be saved.

In return, He asks us to remain in His love under all circumstances. God wants us to leave the divine service with

- the determination to keep His commandments;
- the resolution to serve Him with love and not out of calculation;
- the desire to love our fellow human beings just as God loves them.

The communion of the Holy Spirit

It is through the Spirit that we can hear God and know His will. God promises that He will continue to speak to us in order to guide, comfort, and strengthen us. And He recommends that we remain attentive to that which He says to us, both in the sermon and in our conscience.

Communion in Christ's inheritance goes hand in hand with communion in His sufferings (Romans 8: 17; Philippians 3: 10). God warns us that we will still experience tribulation. But we have nothing to fear. He is with us. He hears our prayers and will answer them. And if we should ever be too weak to pray, the Spirit will make intercession for us (Romans 8: 26–27).



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The communion of the Spirit is also a fellowship of love. The Spirit has poured out the love of Christ in our hearts. As we return to our daily lives, let us remember that God has made us capable of loving others just as they are—provided that this is what we want, that we work on it, and that we implore the Lord for divine help.

The final benediction also attests to the enduring presence of the Spirit in the Church. We have no reason to worry: nothing will prevent the Spirit from leading the Bride into perfect fellowship with the Bridegroom.

Finally, the communion of the Spirit is inseparable from the communion of the saints. We all have the same Spirit, the same faith, and the same future. We all receive the same word and the same bread. Before we part, God exhorts us not to forget that we are all members of the same body, the body of Christ. We can only truly have communion with God by remaining in communion with one another (1 John 1: 3–7). We will always be different from one another. But God does not want us to be prisoners of our differences! He asks us to overcome these and to contribute actively to the unity of the Church. And He reminds us that the communion of the believers is not only a spiritual one. It is also expressed in a concrete way, in solidarity with those in need and by sharing the goods of this world (1 John 3: 17–18).

These few thoughts are far from exhaustive. There are certainly other ways to develop these words of the Apostle Paul. I simply wanted to emphasise the importance of the final benediction and to show the effects it can produce in a believing heart. One last point: this blessing also applies to the one who pronounces it. Dear Apostles, I sincerely hope that you will experience it!