

2021

**Synod Theme: “NUNC DIMITTIS” Luke 2: 29 & 30**

Nunc Dimittis is sung after the second lesson at Evensong. It has been in use as an evening canticle from the earliest age, mention being made of it in the “Apostolical Constitutions”. In it, we thank God, with aged Simeon, that we have been permitted to see the promise of the Saviour of the world fulfilled.

According to thy Word of Lk.2:26,”**And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ”.**

The Nunc Dimittis is one of the canticles used at Evensong.

The word Canticle literally means “a little song,” and is used to denote those unrhymed hymns which are chanted or otherwise sung in Divine Service. With the exception of two, the Te Deum and Benedicite, they are all taken from the Holy Scriptures, three being taken from the Gospel of St. Luke.\* The canticles from St. Luke were first introduced into public worship by St. Caesarius of Arles (A.D 540). The practice of intermingling Psalms and Lessons is of great antiquity, the feeling in which it originated being undoubtedly a desire on the part of the worshippers to express their gratitude for the gift of the Holy Scriptures, and to adore the God whose glorious attributes and whose loving mercy towards mankind those Scriptures reveal. The Council of Laodicea, A.D. 360, directed that Lessons and Psalms should alternate. The ritual of the Church of Lyons, A.D. 499, prescribed Psalms, then a lesson from Moses, then Psalms again, then a lesson from the Prophets, then Psalms once more, then a Gospel. In the pre – Reformation church responds, or short anthems, were sung after the reading of every three or four verses of a chapter.

The short anthems which are commonly sung before and after the Gospel in the communion Service correspond to the canticles in intention.

Luke 2 verses 29 & 30, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation."

Two words in our theme demand definition – Peace and Salvation.

**Peace:** From Latin *par*, through French, - 1 Except in Dn 8<sup>25</sup> 11<sup>21, 24</sup> (where RV corrects to 'security'), the OT 'peace' represents uniformly the Heb. *Shdium* (Eastern *salaam*), the fundamental sense of which – always more or less distinctly implied – is welfare (as in Gn 43<sup>27</sup>, Ps 73<sup>3</sup> etc.) of well-being, in the old turbulent times, peace was the prime condition. The word has the following specific religious uses: (1) it is the common formula of courteous well-wishing, employed both at meeting and at parting (see Gn.43<sup>23</sup>, 1 S 1<sup>17</sup>, Ps 122<sup>7f</sup> cf Mt 10<sup>21</sup>); (2) 'peace' constituted the most conspicuous blessing of the Messianic Kingdom of God (wh. See; cf. Ps 72<sup>3,7</sup>, Is 24 9<sup>5-7</sup> 11<sup>6-9</sup>, Hag 2<sup>9</sup>, Zec9<sup>10</sup>); and (3) it signified a sound and settled understanding between J" and His people (Nu 6<sup>25</sup>, Ps 29<sup>11</sup> 85<sup>8f</sup> 122<sup>6</sup>, Jer 16<sup>5</sup> etc) – hence J's 'covenant of peace is lodged with His priests (Nu25<sup>12</sup>, Mal 2<sup>41</sup>). In this last and richest use the word approximates to its subjective NT signification, implying tranquility of heart, as in Ps 4<sup>1</sup> 119<sup>105</sup>, Is 48<sup>13 22</sup>.

2. The transition from OT to NT usage strikingly illustrates the inwardness of Christianity. Out of some 90 NT instances of 'peace' there are not more than 8 or 9 which do not refer to heart-peace. The Greek *eirene* in its proper sense signified peace strictly, as the opposite of conflict; but it took over, first in the LXX and then in the NT, the broader import of *shuim*, which is conspicuous in the (Hebraistic) Benedictions (see Mk 5<sup>34</sup>, Lk 7<sup>50</sup> 24<sup>38</sup>, Jn 14<sup>27</sup>, Js 2<sup>15</sup> etc) and in the epistolary salutations. In the latter

formule, 'peace' comprehends the sum of blessing experienced, as 'grace' the sum of blessing bestowed, from God in Christ. The Messianic peace (1 (2), above) reappears in Lk 12<sup>29</sup> 2<sup>14</sup>, Mt 10<sup>24</sup>; and the peace of harmony with God (1 (3) in Jn 16<sup>33</sup>, Ac10<sup>28</sup>, Ro 8<sup>8</sup> 15<sup>33</sup>, Ph 4<sup>7</sup> etc. The uses just named are gathered up, with a deepened sense, into the specific NT doctrine of peace, of which Paul is the exponent, and Ro 5<sup>1</sup> the classical text (cf v<sup>10</sup>, also 2 Co 5<sup>13-21</sup>, Eph 2<sup>13-18</sup>, Col 1<sup>20</sup>; "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" is the state and the experience of those who have been 'reconciled' to the Father through the sacrifice offered by the Son of His love, whose 'trespasses' are 'forgiven' and in whose heart 'the spirit of adoption' dwells. Reconciled to God, men are reconciled to life and the world; by His cross, Christ 'has slain' all a blow 'the enmity' between God and man and between race and race (Eph 2<sup>15</sup>). 'Peace on earth' is to flow from 'the peace of Christ' that 'rules in' Christian 'hearts' (Col 3<sup>15</sup>).

**SALVATION, SAVIOR** – 'Salvation' is the generic term employed in Scripture to express the idea of any gracious deliverance of God, but specially of the spiritual redemption from sin and its consequences predicted by the OT prophets, and realized in the mission and work of the Saviour Jesus Christ.

1. **In the OT**, - The root meaning of the principal OT words for 'save,' "salvation," "savior" is, to be brand, spacious; salvation is enlargement. As illustrations of this OT meaning of salvation may be taken the words of Moses at the Red Sea. "Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah" (Ex 14<sup>13</sup>) – "He is become my salvation' (15<sup>2</sup>); or the avowal of the psalmist, 'This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Ps 34<sup>6</sup>). Jehovah is said to have given 'saviours' to Israel in the time of the Judges (Neh 9<sup>27</sup>). Victory in battle is "salvation" (Ex 14<sup>14</sup>, 1 S

14<sup>45</sup>, Ps 20 etc). Salvation, or deliverance, of this kind is sometimes national, but sometimes also individual (cf. of David, 2 S 22, Ps 18). Such external deliverances, however, it is to be observed, are never divorced from spiritual conditions. It is the righteous or penitent alone who are entitled to look to God for His saving help; no others can claim Him as the rock of their salvation (Ps 18<sup>1-3</sup>, cf. 4<sup>1</sup>). When therefore the people had turned their backs on Jehovah, and come only through a change of heart, through repentance. The chief need was to be saved from the sin itself. In the prophets, accordingly, the perspective some what changes. External blessings deliverance from enemies, return from exile, are still hoped for, but the main stress is laid on a changed heart, forgiveness, restoration to God's favour, righteousness. In the pictures of the Messianic age, it is these things that come to be dwelt on (cf Jer 31<sup>31-34</sup>, Ezek 36<sup>26-28</sup>, Hos 14 etc). As the idea of salvation becomes more spiritual, it likewise becomes more universal; the Gentiles are to share its blessing (Is 45<sup>2-24</sup> 49<sup>8-12</sup> 60<sup>1-12</sup>).

The teaching of the prophets bore fruit in the age preceding the advent of Jesus in deepening ideas of the future life, of resurrection and a futures perfected state of the connexion of prosperity with righteousness – though mostly in the sense of outward legal obedience, the very error against which the prophets declaimed - and in more concrete representations of the Messiah. But there never failed a godly kernel, who cherished more spiritual hopes, and waited in patience and prayer for 'the consolation of Israel' (Lk 2<sup>25</sup>).

2. **In the NT.** – In the NT the word 'salvation' (soieria, from soler, "saviour") is sometimes applied to temporal benefits, like healings (eg. Mt.9<sup>22</sup> 'thy faith hath made thee whole,' lit. 'saved thee'), but most generally it is employed as a comprehensive term for the spiritual and eternal blessings brought to men by the appearance and redeeming work of Jesus Christ. The name

Jesus was given Him because 'it is he that shall save his people from their sins' (Mt 1<sup>21</sup>); He is distinctively the 'Saviour' (Lk 2<sup>11</sup>); His work on earth was 'to seek and to save that which was lost' (Lk 19<sup>10</sup>); His death and resurrection were a means to salvation (Ro 5<sup>9-10</sup>); He is exalted 'to be a Prince and a Saviour' to give repentance and remission of sins (Act 5<sup>21</sup>); 'in none other is there salvation' (4<sup>12</sup>). In Apostolic usage, therefore, salvation is the all-embracing name for the blessings brought by the gospel (cf. 'the gospel of your salvation,' Eph 1<sup>13</sup>; 'the word of this salvation; Ac 13<sup>25</sup>; 'repentance unto salvation,' 2 Co 7<sup>10</sup> etc). To expound fully the contents of this term, accordingly, would be to expound the contents of the gospel. Enough here to say that it includes deliverance from all sin's evils, and the bestowal of all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph 1<sup>3</sup>). It begins on earth in forgiveness, renewal, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, enlightenment, guidance, strengthening, comfort; and is perfected in the blessedness and glory, in which body and soul share, of the life everlasting. The fact never to be forgotten about it is, that it has been obtained at the infinite cost of the redeeming death of God's own Son (cf. Rev.5<sup>8</sup>).

The above definitions reveal that;

- a) Peace has to do with welfare or wellbeing. Peace on earth is to flow from the peace of Christ that 'rules in 'Christian 'hearts'
- b) Salvation is most generally employed as a comprehensive term for the spiritual and eternal blessings brought to humanity by the appearance and redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Hence, salvation whether physical or spiritual recalls the plan of God to save humanity and the plan was realized at the infinite cost of the redeeming death of Jesus Christ.

For Simeon when he saw Jesus Christ he felt fulfilled and thus he exclaimed that he could now depart in peace, because his eyes has seen the

salvation which many prophets and priests looked forward to without luck. The salvation could only be realized in the person and work of Jesus Christ. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple to be consecrated to God, they met an old man who told them what their child would become.

In Luke 2:25ff

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God with the Nunc Dimittis.

Nunc Dimittis is a song of a heart that felt fulfilled. A long awaited promise has been realized. Mission of Simeon has been accomplished. He was full of praise because his eyes have seen the long awaited salvation, therefore he can depart in peace.

The condition of the Jews at the birth of Christ may be summarily described as marked by political impotence and religious decadence:

- (1) **The political situation** – From the age of the Exile, the Jews in Palestine were subject to a foreign domination – Persian. Greek, Egyptian, Syrian, in rapid succession. Following upon a century of independence under the Maccabees, the country was incorporated in the Roman Empire as a division of the province of Syria. In certain circumstances, which have a parallel in British India, the Romans recognized a feudatory king, and it was with this status that Herod the Great reigned over Palestine. At his death in B.C. 4, his dominions

were divided among his three sons; but on the deposition of Archelaus in 6 A.D. Judea and Samaria were placed under a Roman procurator. Herod Antipas and Philip continued to rule as vassal princes, with the title of tetrarchs, over Galilee and Iturea respectively. The pressure of the Roman rule was felt in the stern measures which were taken to suppress any dangerous expressions of national feeling, and also in the exactions of the publicans to whom the taxes were farmed. Internal administration was largely an affair of the Jewish Church. To a highly spirited people like the Jews, with memories of former freedom and power, the loss of national independence was galling; and their natural restlessness under the foreign yoke, combined as it was with the Messianic hopes that formed a most vital element of their religion, was a source of anxiety not only to the Roman authorities but to their own leaders.

- (2) **The religious situation**, - From the religious point of view it was a decadent age. No doubt there is a tendency to exaggerate the degradation of the world at our Lord's coming, on the principle that the darkest hour must have preceded the dawn; and in fairness the indictment should be restricted to the statement that the age marked a serious declension from the highest level of OT religion. It had, in fact, many of the features which have re-appeared in the degenerate periods of the Christian Church. (a) One such feature was the disappearance of the prophetic man, and his replacement as a religious authority by representatives of sacred learning. As the normal condition of things in the Christian Church has been similar, it cannot in itself be judged to be symptomatic of anything worse than a silver age that the experiments of the Scriptures and of the tradition were now the chief religious guides of the people (see Seanans). Moreover, a very genuine religious originality and fervor had continued to find

expression, in the Apocalyptic Literature of later Judaism (see APOCALIPTIC LITERATURE). (B) a more decisive proof of degradation is the exaltation of the ceremonial and formal side of religion as a substitute for personal piety and righteousness of life. This tendency had its classic representatives in the Pharisees. The best of their number must have exhibited, as Josephus shows, a zeal for God and a self-denial like that of roman Catholic saints-otherwise the veneration of the people, which Josephus shared, would be inexplicable (Ani. XVII. li. 4); but as a class our Lord charges them with sins of covetousness and inhumanity, which gave the colour of hypocrisy to their ritualistic scruples (Mt.24;see PHARISEES), (c) A further characteristic of decadence is that the religious organization tends to come in the place of God, as the object of devotion, and there appears the powerful ecclesiastic who, though he may be worldly and even skeptical, is indispensable as the symbol and protector of the sacred institution. This type was represented by the Sadducees – in their general outlook men of the world, in their doctrine skeptics with an ostensible basis of conservation, - who filled the priestly offices, controlled the Sanbedrin, and endeavoured to maintain correct relations with their Roman masters. It can also well be believed that, as Josephus tells us, they professed an aristocratic dislike to public business, which they nevertheless dominated; and that they humoured the multitude by an occasional show of religious zeal.

In this world presided over by pedants, formalists, and political ecclesiastics, the common people receive a fairly good character. Their religion was the best that then had a footing among men, and they were in earnest about it. They had been purified by the providential discipline of centuries from the last vestiges of idolatry. It is noteworthy that Jesus brings against them no such sweeping accusations of immorality and cruelty as are met with in Amos and



Hosea. Their chief fault was that they were disposed to look on their religion as a means of procuring them worldly good, and that they were blind and unreceptive in regard to purely spiritual blessings. The influence which the Pharisees had over them shows that they were capable of reverencing, and eager to obey, those who seemed to them to speak for God; and their response to the preaching of John the Baptist was still more to their honour. There is evidence of a contemporary strain of self-renouncing idealism in the existence of communities which sought deliverance from the evil of the world in the austerities of an ascetic life. The Gospels introduce us to not a few men and women who impress us as exemplifying a simple and noble type of piety-nourished as they were on the religion of the OT, and waiting patiently for the salvation of God. Into a circle pervaded by this atmosphere Jesus was born.

The above gives reason for the statement of Simeon. He was in no doubt familiar with the prediction of the Old Testament passages about the coming of the Messiah. The passages like Isaiah 7:1-17; 9:2-7; 11:1-end, 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9 to mention a few.

One recalls the discussion of the Samaritan woman with Jesus in chapter 4 of the Gospel of John where the Woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us. Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:25 & 26. The above testifies to the expectations of the Jews for the Messiah. The time when the world will be filled with the knowledge of God. The woman said "He will explain everything to us."

Mission accomplished is the connotation of Simeon's song "nunc dimittis" i.e. The fullness of time. We view our mission as Priest and Bishop in the Church of God and particularly in Ilesa Anglican Diocese along the line of

Simeon's own confession. God has assured us that He will accomplish the task in the responsibilities to which He assigned us in the Diocese.

Hence, we can say like Simeon "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation.

By the end of the year 2021 when we shall retire from the church active service as Priest and Bishop, we would have worked for 51 years in the priesthood out of which we would have served for 21 years and 6 months as Bishop in the Church of God and in particular as Diocesan Bishop in Ilesa Anglican Diocese.

When we assumed office on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of June 2000. We had assignments to fulfill for the 21 years and 6 months. They have to do with the spiritual, physical and financial developments of the Diocese. All these were spelt out in the vision and mission of the Diocese and also in the Diocesan Anthem:

## **Vision**

- (i) To prepare children of God in our Diocese for heaven by encouraging a worshipping community.
- (ii) To prepare a community united in Spirit and committed to pragmatic evangelism and
- (iii) To stimulate a community with a resolve to propagate the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to the nook and cranny of the world.

## **Mission:**

- (i) To make every member of our Diocese a bible based Christian.

- (ii) That as they gaze on Jesus Christ's face day-by-day, they will become like Him and be able to reflect Him to the people of our generation.
- (iii) That all may know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

### **Diocesan Anthem:**

1. Ilesa, Anglican, Diocese is our own,  
We are Bible based;  
And Bible believing members,  
With our faith in Christ, and doers of  
His Word  
We shall move our  
Diocese to a greater height.

**Chorus:** Pragmatic Evangelistic work  
Is our approach of converting souls  
Readiness to serve, to share and save  
Is a task for us  
We soldiers of the LORD.

2. It's our LORD's command  
That we all must go  
To all people everywhere  
In the uni-verse  
And make them di-sci-ples  
Of Christ our LORD  
Baptize, teach and make them  
Obey Christ's commands.

**Chorus:** Pragmatic Evangelistic work ...

### **Spirituality:**

### **Mission and Evangelism:**

The Diocese starts the year with Jesus Celebration, which lasts for two weeks.

The year 2020 Jesus Celebration took place between January 12 and 26, 2020. The celebration ended with harvest of souls' thanksgiving on Sunday, January 28, 2020. The theme for the celebration was "**Jehovah Reigns**" (Daniel 4:17).

During the year we have the following programmes to equip our members spiritually:-

- (i) Clergy school
- (ii) Youth camp
- (iii) Children camp
- (iv) Anglican Holy Ghost Retreat
- (v) Sunday School Teachers' Seminars and Children Camp
- (vi) Festival of prayer and fasting
- (vii) Free eye mission
- (viii) This year we organized seminars for Parish Councillors and Church Wardens
- (ix) Clergy and clergy Wives school.

In addition to the above there are weekly and monthly programmes:-

- (i) Prayer and fasting every Wednesday - 9.00a.m to 12 noon
- (ii) Youth Night Vigil every second Friday of the month
- (iii) Night Vigil at every Church, last Friday of every month
- (iv) Revivals at every parish at the last three days of every month
- (v) Bible study with sermons on Sundays

- (vi) Tuesday weekly Bible study
- (vii) Quarterly prayer vigil of Clergy and Clergy wives.

### **Physical and Financial Development:**

- 1a) The turning of the Diocesan Headquarters started in the year 2001 and the work reached an enviable position in the year 2007 with the building and dedication of 78 lockup shops before the crisis of creation of Diocese put a set back on it. However, we have invested a lot on the Diocesan Headquarters; Nursery and Primary Schools, Diocesan Clinic, 4 Air condition chartlets for guests, renovation of the hall and a big kitchen with equipments. Renovated offices with Inverters which gave lights for 24 hours; a big generator that served the whole 20 acres of land, 2 and 3 bedded hostels and Jesus celebration equipments.
- b) Digging of 15 wells in 15 communities in the Diocese – 2000 - 2021
- 2) The new Bishop's house in the Bishops court started in the year 2002 and was completed in the year 2006.
- 3) The total renovation of the Cathedral started in the year 2012 and was completed in the year 2014.
- 4) Building the Chapel, donated by Ven. J.A. & Mrs. M.A. Oni at the Bishops court, Oke-Ooye, Ilesa.
- 5) Building and completion of St. Peter's Anglican Church, Ilo vicarage and fencing of the land.

- 6) Building up Bishop Falope Memorial Secondary School at Ipetu-Ijesa site where staff and students lived.
- 7) Relocating the school to Iyemogun Road and renovating the structures on the site. Building the two blocks of 8 classrooms.
- 8) Surveying the Odogbo land of 78 acres with almost 3 million naira.
- 9) Building the new office complex at the Bishops court, Oke-Ooye, Ilesa.
- 10) A new Diocese in the sense that Ilesa Anglican Diocese gave birth to 3 daughter Dioceses (a) Ilesa South West, (b) Ijesa North and (c) Ijesa North East in the year 2009. What remains of the Ilesa Anglican Diocese is what we refer to as 'a new Diocese' New approach to priestly offices and new approach to the staff development and spirituality in the Diocese. The clergy has opportunity to build themselves up, academically and spiritually. The staff cooperative in the Diocese which we started in the year 2001 has helped a lot of priest to train their children, build houses and buy vehicles without much stress.
- 11) **Investments** – The Diocese invested in Ajayi Crowther Hostel buildings (i) Akinola Hall and Adetiloye Hall along with Ibadan and Kwara Ecclesiastical Provinces to the tune of **#38,461,305.00k (Thirty-eight million, four hundred and sixty-one thousand, three hundred and five naira only)**
- 12) Recently we built by the grace of God 32, one room apartment as Retreat Center, which is named 'Bishop Olubayo Sowale Retreat Centre.' This cost us so far **#40,100,209.60k (Forty million One Hundred Thousand, Two Hundred and Nine Naira, Sixty Kobo)..**

- 13) Bishop Falope Memorial Secondary School and Sophie Falope Nursery and Primary School have come to stay.
- 14) Jesus celebration equipments.
- 15) 4 mobile toilets @ #250,000.00k each.
- 16) Big canopy.
- 17) 500 white chairs.
- 18) P.A. system for the celebration.
- 19) 60KVA generator for the Bishops court.
- 20) Renovation and transformation of several parish churches. St. Peter's Anglican Church, Ibokun and finally Christ Anglican Church, Erin – Ijesa.
- 21) Dedication of numerous church buildings and vicarages.
- 22) Dedication of shopping complex in some of our parishes to mention a few.
- 23) Purchase of about 3 acres of land at Bishop Sowale estate for about #6,000,000.00k.
- 24) Monthly seminars for the clergy.
- 25) Many clergy have privileges to develop themselves academically by enrolling in Universities for first degree and post graduate degrees.
- 26) We started cooperative among clergy and staff and it helps without stress in training of children, at schools, purchasing of lands, building of personal houses and purchasing of cars.
- 27) Purchase of vehicles for the Diocese as seen in the audited account.

All these were possible in spite of the fact that when we assumed office in year 2000 we met only #600,000.00k in the account of the Diocese.

In addition to the above we had the following foundation for award of scholarship for indigents' students and the less privileged in our midst - They are; **Ven. Banjo Osewa, Hon. Justice Kayode Eso, Hon. Justice Ekundayo Kolawole, Ven. Jacob Moyinlorun Ajayi, Chief Michael Olaarewaju Awe, Ven. Noah Babakayode Ajakaiye.**

Today we feel fulfilled because all what God put in our hearts to do concerning the Diocese were fully accomplished. To us, it is a mission accomplished.

I like to express my sincere appreciation to the house of clergy, all clergy wives, all members of the house of Laity, the legal luminaries ably led by the Chancellor, Chief Felix Olusegun Fagbohunbe, SAN, all Fellows of the Diocese and Bishop's Nominees, through you, God had accomplished this purposes in our life.

I express my sincere thanks to my wife, Mama Ilesa, Mrs. Morenike Bolanle Sowale and our children for providing enabling environment for the successes recorded to God's glory.

With the above in view, we can sing the Nunc Dimittis with the old Simeon. 'Now let thy servant depart in peace.'

**Your Bishop & Friend,**  
*+ Olubayo Ilesa.*