

Monday, March 9, Lenten Lamentations & Action for Nigeria



EYN (Church of the Brethren) Church burned in Garkida, Adamawa State, northeast Nigeria, during massive attack by Boko Haram, February 22, 2020 (Photo source: Dr. Sayo Ajiboye)

As an American former Episcopalian whose parish was one welcomed into the Anglican Church of Nigeria when we had no other way to stay in the Anglican Communion, I am deeply grateful for the faithfulness of the Anglican Church of Nigeria. We all are – or should be – well aware that persecution of Nigeria’s Christians is not new. Attacks on churches, imposition of Sharia, killings of individuals – even mass slaughters – have been going on for decades.

Satanic attacks on the Body of Christ in Nigeria are so strong and virulent because the Body of Christ in Nigeria *is* so strong. It has made such in-roads for the Kingdom of God. Current suffering of Christians of all denominations in the northern and middle belts is as never before.

These horrific attacks have caused massive displacement, which in turn has created more attacks in neighboring countries. What our Nigerian sisters and brothers in Christ go through because of Boko Haram and Fulani jihadists is overwhelming. Adding insult to injury, most Western media and foreign policy elites portray the deliberate and systematic targeting of Christians by these groups as “clashes” between Christians and Muslims and as “disputes” between “herders” (with RPG’s) and farmers – caused by *climate change*!

I [recently wrote](#) about brutal attacks on Nigerian Christians for the Institute on Religion and Democracy’s [Juicy Ecumenism](#). I referenced the comprehensive [report on Nigeria](#) by French human rights activist Bernard-Henri Levy. I also explain that American Christian leaders and human rights activists sent an [open letter](#) to President Donald Trump urging he appoint a *Special Envoy* for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region. Among the letter’s 114 signers was GAFCON Chairman and my archbishop, the Most Reverend Dr. Foley Beach.

Reports of these attacks come almost daily. What can we do? When we look at this situation, we feel helpless and that can paralyze us into doing *nothing*. That’s exactly what the Enemy

wants. Then, even if there is something we can do – whether in the realm of spiritual warfare, political advocacy, or meeting human need – we remain passive.

I will address the problem of passivity in an upcoming devotion, inspired by the book *This Day We Fight: Breaking the Bondage of a Passive Spirit*, by Francis Frangipane. There are Christian sisters and brothers in Nigeria – as elsewhere – who need those of us who have no threat of violence or fear of danger against us for following Christ to take up that God-given Galatians 6: 10 mandate, the responsibility that we have for persecuted Christians.

In the days to come I will also call your attention to an [attack](#) that took place in Nigeria* on Easter a year ago, April 21, 2019. On the holiest and most joyful day of the Christian calendar a [horrific attack](#) took the lives of eight Christian young people as they marched in witness for Christ's resurrection. The attack – which in many other similar situations around the world is referred to as “jihad by car crash” – also injured dozens young Christians. Many are still suffering from their injuries and have not received physical therapy or even wheelchairs!

Persecution is overwhelming. But in some situations, like that explained above, and many others, there are tangible and effective actions that Christians blessed with more freedom and safety can take to help. *We just have to overcome our passivity and feelings of helplessness.*

*Also, please do not forget the massive attack on Christians in Sri Lanka on Easter.

Scripture: One of the Psalms appointed in Daily Office Evening Prayer today is Psalm 20. Please pray this psalm with Nigeria in mind, and on your lips. “May the LORD hear you, brothers and sisters in Nigeria, in the day of trouble, the Name of the God of Jacob defend you from Boko Haram, Fulani jihadists, and all those who persecute you for His sake” and so on.

Suggested Action:

- In 2015 I worked on a prayer initiative about global Christian persecution based on the [book referenced above](#), *This Day We Fight*. See IRD's Juicy Ecumenism website: [This Day We Fight](#) and [Preparing for Spiritual Battle](#). I'll save others for St. Patrick's Day.
- Two great songs by Northern Irish band Rend Collective may assist you in prayer and spiritual warfare. First, “[Weep With Me](#)” says to the Lord, “I don't need answers, all I need is to know that You care for me. . . Here in the midst of my lament, I have faith, Lord, I still believe.” The second is “[Marching On](#),” a powerful song for spiritual warfare.

Prayer: You'll see on GAFCON site that Mrs. Abiodun Egbunu has initiated prayer for Nigeria, praying *one minute each day* at 9.00pm (see site for details). If you need an idea for prayer, here is a wonderful Prayer against Violence, borrowed from the late Reverend Cecil Kerr:

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You that through Your death on the Cross You disarmed the powers of evil. Help us, we pray You, to enter into Your victory and to stand in Your authority against all evil. Send forth Your light and Your truth, O Lord. Bring to light the deeds of darkness and let plans of violence and murder be revealed. By the power of Your Holy Spirit convict those who have allowed their minds to be dominated by evil. Lead them, O Lord, to true repentance that they may receive Your new life and rejoice in Your forgiving love. Amen.