

CONVERSATION WITH ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL CHARLES PALMER - BUCKLE

The Most Rev. Gabriel Charles Palmer-Buckle, Archbishop of Cape Coast and Vice President of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference (GCBC),



was on 1st February 2021 declared positive to Covid -19. He went for the test on his own volition on 27th January 2021, after experiencing some feverish conditions. Consequently, he was quarantined for 17 days at the Ga East Municipal Hospital where medication and care were given him. His Grace underwent a review-test and was pronounced negative and released on 17th February 2021 which happened to be Ash-Wednesday – the beginning of the 40 days Lenten Season of the Universal Church.

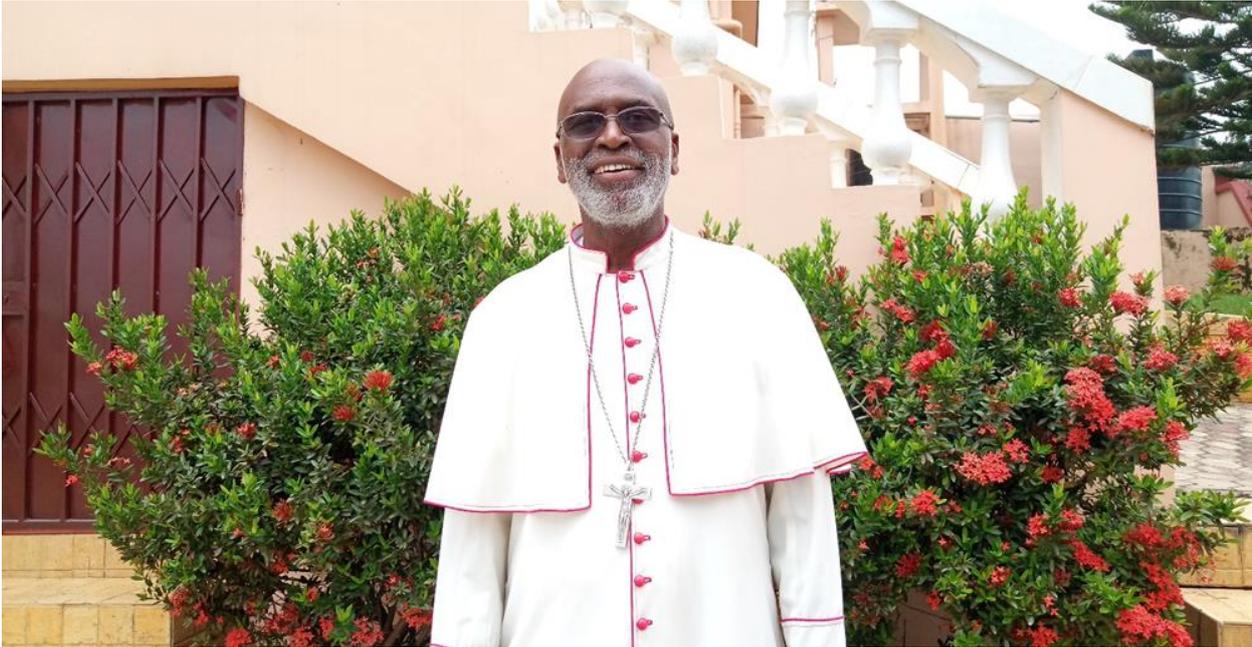
Instead of being certified free to return to his main domain – the Archdiocese of Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana, he was rather directed to stay in Accra to undergo a “Post Hospitalization Management of Covid-19”. He stayed at Kwabenya –a suburb in the Greater Accra Region from 17th February to 15th March 2021. By 15th March, he underwent another review and was finally let off the hook of Covid 19.

In this very incisive conversation, which took place on Laetare Sunday (rejoice Sunday (4th Sunday of Lent), the enigmatic Archbishop who described himself as a “Covid-19 Survival Graduate” shared extensively, his experiences while in quarantine, in post hospitalization management and now, the mission he discerned God was sending him to go and carry out among all the peoples.

Excerpts

My Sense of Covid-19 Mission

God gave me a mission through the many messages I received from my Brother Bishops, home and abroad, my priests, religious, the lay faithful of Ghana and my many friends all over the world. All of them kept saying that God has a



Most Rev. Gabriel Charles Palmer-Buckle – Archbishop of Cape Coast and Vice President of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference, at Kwabenya during the Interview.

purpose for allowing me to contract Covid -19; to experience its evil effects and to have the courage to admit them. I released my first video clip of my Covid experiences after five days of quarantine at the Ga East Municipal Hospital. And as soon as I went public, that I have tested positive to Covid-19, messages started pouring in from all categories of people, thanking me for the courage to admit that I have it and to declare that anybody, big or small could contract it. They told me emphatically that God has a purpose for me in that experience and from then, I felt a sense of mission to continue to share. Philippe Cardinal Ouédraogo, Archbishop of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) called by phone, also another Cardinal from the Vatican and many others - all made it clear to me that God has a purpose for me in it.

So, your Grace, what is the purpose? Can you tell the world out there, which particular passage of scripture speaks to you concerning your experiences of Covid-19?

The Archbishop further shared that two events of the period would always remain engraved in his mind. First was his being discharged on 17th February 2021 (Ash Wednesday), which marked the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. He said, “the period of Lent and the person of Jonah speak powerfully to me, giving me a sense of mission”. Just as prophet Jonah was sent to the people of Nineveh to preach repentance, the Archbishop said he now saw himself standing on the shores of the whole world to share his Covid message to all humanity and to plead for

conversion and a change of lifestyle. He summarized the core of his message thus “Covid-19 is real and very dangerous and should be avoided through prayer, strict observance of the Covid protocols and again, prayer and discipline”. He reiterated the need for people, both great and small, to continue to observe the Covid -19 protocols, namely: washing of hands with soap and running water and the use of sanitizers. He re-emphasized the right use of nose masks and maintenance of social distancing especially the habit of embracing saying “there’s a time for everything; a time to embrace and a time to seize from embracing”.

His Grace then quoted Psalm 118 verses 15 to 19 as the scripture passage that inspired him together with the people’s encouragement, which gave him a sense of mission that God wanted him to share his deliverance and to declare the deeds of the Lord. He read out the Psalmist musings with great delight which states, *“The joyful shout of deliverance is heard in the tent of the just. The Lord’s right hand has triumphed ... The Lord chastised me harshly but did not hand me over to death. I shall not die but live to declare the goodness of the Lord... Open to me the gate of righteousness. I will enter and thank the Lord”*.

The Archbishop shared that he had a very severe type of Covid-19 and at a stage, had to be put in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and supported with oxygen. He said he experienced intense body heat and sweating, loss of energy, appetite and sense of smell. He said he decided to make all this public to help people to know “Covid is real” and that those who did not have it should do all they could not to contract it but rather support the efforts of the Government in fighting the pandemic. He expressed the view that God was not the one who brought Covid-19 to kill people but could allow anybody to get it.

Archbishop Palmer-Buckle said that like Jonah, who was sent by God to warn the people of Nineveh to repent from their bad habits, he too had been sent by God through his covid-19 experiences to call everyone to conversion, to self-discipline and to cleanliness.

Gratitude

In gratitude to God and to the people, the Archbishop, beaming with smiles declared, “I’m happy to be a Covid-19 Survivor –a Graduate of Covid-19”. “Thanks be to God”, he said. He also expressed immense gratitude to the Government and the medical personnel and to all health workers especially those who took very good care of him at the Ga East Municipal Hospital. He thanked his Brother Bishops, Priests and Religious and the entire Layfaithful for their powerful prayers and presence with him throughout. He thanked his domestic staff especially his Driver and Cook for their great love and care during his post

hospitalisation management of Covid. To all others who supported him in one way or the other – by phone calls, gifts, prayers and visits, his Grace expressed gratitude and offered a prayer to God to bless and reward them abundantly.

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Archbishop Gabriel Charles Palmer-Buckle – looking forward to a Brighter Future.