Amen

Amen is a Hebrew term, which means something is solid, true, faithful. When Jesus preached, He often said, “Amen, amen, I say to you,” which really means, “What I say is the true word of God.” He wanted to show that He is the Son of God, the truth, and His Father speaks through Him. Each amen we say in a divine service has a particular meaning and it is something we should understand.

We say amen at the end of the preaching to recognize that it is the word of God. It is a profession of faith and truth. When the congregation says this amen, they confirm it is really God’s word. In turn, this means we agree and believe what is said because it’s the word of God. We commit to do what was said in the sermon.

We also say amen after our prayers. This amen expresses that we want and need what was prayed for, and that God can provide it. Sometimes one prays and doesn’t really mean it. When we say the Lord’s Prayer, we pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive our debtors.” Forgiving others is not always easy, but we should be earnest in speaking and agreeing with those words by saying amen. The amen at the end of every prayer is important because it means we sincerely agree with each statement in the prayer.

Amen is said after the absolution, which means that we believe our sins are forgiven. Sometimes we don’t have enough faith that God really delivered us, but saying amen after the absolution means that we truly believe we have been forgiven. Not only do we proclaim our belief in the forgiveness of our individual sins, but also that my brothers’ and sisters’ sins have been forgiven.

When we say amen after receiving Holy Communion, it is a wonderful profession of faith. We believe that this is the body and blood of Jesus, that He died for me, and that He loves me. When you receive Holy Communion and say amen, it is a personal one; we say that amen alone. After the consecration, the whole congregation says amen, which is a profession of faith, but then comes the personal one. It applies to my life, to my soul, and it signifies my personal relationship with Jesus. We also say amen when the departed receive Holy Communion, which displays our belief that the departed really received the communion. The whole congregation believes that salvation is possible in the yonder world.

Amen is said twice in an ordination. The brother first says amen after his ordination, which means he believes he has received this new commission from God and that He will give him all he needs to fulfill it. Then the whole congregation says amen. They believe and agree that this man was commissioned by God and accept him as being sent by God.

When the congregation says amen after the blessing for marriage or for confirmation, it shows those who receive the blessing that the congregation believes God has blessed them and the congregation commits themselves to helping them enjoy the blessing.

*This article is based on Chief Apostle Schneider’s thoughts from the Venezuela Apostle Meeting in August 2014.





Going forward, the USA Apostles and I would like pastoral care to be a more intentional focus in each of our congregations. One might ask, what does this entail and whom does it involve? Perhaps the first thing we all think of when addressing pastoral care is the responsibility of the minister.

In its most general sense, pastoral care refers to the ministries/services usually performed by a pastor. Some denominations of the Christian faith use the phrase to refer to more specific aspects of a pastor's ministry, such as counseling and visitation. The core idea of "pastoral care" is that pastors are to care. The word pastor comes from the Latin word for *shepherd*. A pastor is to be a shepherd or caretaker of God's flock.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:2-3

"From this we derive that ministers have the task of 'tending' the flock of Christ and of preparing them for the return of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. They do this 'willingly' and 'eagerly.'" (Catechism 12.4)

Pastoral care isn't confined to the responsibilities of the ministers, but it is also the task of the entire congregation. This relates to practical help in life. In one of His parables, Jesus says...

For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Matthew 25: 35-36

Pastoral care is a model of emotional and spiritual support that can be found in all cultures and traditions. The goal of pastoral care is to support one another in pain, loss, and anxiety, or in triumphs, joys, and victories.

In Luke 24:13-35, we learn of five simple aspects of pastoral care from the encounter the Lord Jesus had with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. This encounter started with the disciples feeling sad, frustrated, angry, and uncertain about the future. Jesus recognized the situation and drew close to them with empathy towards their situation. He first had to understand what was troubling their hearts. In the time that Jesus spent with the disciples, He endeavored to help change the way they felt by loving them and never judging them, and guiding them in a

way to move forward. We are all able to learn from this encounter of how the Lord Jesus provided care for the disciples. Let us now look into each of the five aspects to help us grow in our understanding of pastoral care.

The first aspect Jesus demonstrated was how to **recognize what is happening**. If we do not recognize that we have a needy neighbor, how can we care for them? This recognition happens when we first love God and come to our divine service experiences, as well as congregational activities, with an *attitude to serve and not be served*. By not focusing on ourselves, we will be more likely to see if those around us need our care. We can be aware of one's need for care in how they greet us or what they talk about in conversation. This is just a simple opportunity of how we can recognize what is happening in someone's life.

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Once we have recognized what is happening, we can look at the second aspect, which is to **spend time together**. Letting someone know that you have time for them demonstrates care and true desire to help. Spending time together can apply to a variety of moments, such as simply talking at church after a divine service or connecting for a few moments at a small group. If there needs to be a more specific time to be set aside, a get together can be scheduled. When you have these moments together, try to be empathetic instead of just acknowledging their situation. When we try to put ourselves in the shoes of others, it will make our care more impactful.

The third aspect Jesus showed was His ability to **listen**. James 1:19 tells us how to do this: "*be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry."* (NLT) God gave us two ears and one mouth. We should listen twice as much as we speak, but sometimes we rush in too quickly with advice or our experiences with similar situations. What we need to do is try to understand the perspective of other people. When we listen, we radiate a feeling of closeness that can create a rapport. Listening is a sign of putting the other person first, which means we don't resort to talking about our own experiences or trying to formulate a solution. Positive body language and posture exudes that you are listening attentively, thus showing understanding and focus.

Everyone always likes to get answers. Perhaps when you extend care to someone in need they may seek answers from you. How should we go about this as Christians? This brings us to the fourth aspect, which is **providing answers and counsel**. First we must recognize that we are not professional counselors and should not provide advice and counsel for people on topics and issues that need professional or medical help. In matters of spiritual questions, we take a path pointing to our faith by using Scripture in a timely manner or using the Catechism in understanding our doctrine. In matters of natural life, we can offer help by discussing the pros and cons of a decision or situation; from this we can deduce a direction on a decision that answers the question, "What will bring me closer to God?" Our answers and direction should be based on the Gospel and that which brings a soul closer to God. Christ can be the solution for every need and problem that arises in life. If Christ is our solution, then through His love, we can help others to draw near Him in their own situations in life. When this connection of closeness to God grows, we will not want to leave Christ, but will want to remain as the disciples did.

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS IS A ROAD THAT MUST BE WALKED

Finally, Jesus left the disciples after He recognized their situation, accompanied them, listened, and provided answers and direction. The fifth aspect is to **move on**. Moving on means that by teaching the Gospel, we are creating an opportunity for a soul to practice self-responsibility. The road to Emmaus is a road that must be walked. The walk started out in disbelief and sadness. It ended in joy, excitement, love, and true devotion. The same can happen to each one of us as we bring pastoral care into a congregational focus. As we read in Galatians 6:2, *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ;"* we see it is all of our responsibility to help and care for one another on our journeys.– **LRK**