

Reflections from a Nigerian Mission Leader on the Challenges, Dangers and Hazards of Ministry

The context of our missionary endeavors in Africa fits very well into the context described by the Lord in Matthew 10, which contrasts *the challenges, dangers and hazards of the missionary enterprise with the blessings, securities and insurances provided by the Lord of the Harvest Himself*. Most of our fields are located in the highly resistant Muslim areas of West and Central Africa or the worn torn regions of countries like Liberia and Ivory Coast. Our missionaries have been operating in the face of dangers and in environments and situations fraught with hazards. Therefore, our policies concerning the dangers of being a missionary under the Christian Missionary Foundation, whether on a short-term or career basis, derive from the Lord's own policies as contained in this chapter of Matthew as well as that of Luke 10.

First of all, we accept that recruitment into the missionary force is similar to being



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recruited into a military institution. Military institutions exist to fight battles, and engaging in battles results in casualties of diverse kinds. The Lord himself warned of this when He gave an orientation to the Twelve and the Seventy, respectively, before sending them on their missionary assignments. He described the fields (whether at home or abroad) as fraught with dangers, and warned about obvious costs to be paid by those who have chosen to heed his call and be engaged in the work on the fields. He sent them as “sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matthew 10:16). He also painted a picture of “a continuum of hazards” from denial of access, persecution, arrest, detention, imprisonment (including kidnapping), and ultimately death (Matthew 10:14-39).

In His Priestly Valedictory Prayer for His followers in John 17, He also reminded His disciples that the World into which He was sending them was full of dangers and ministry hazards, and He asked the Father to protect them while doing their ministry in the world—not to remove them from the world or shield them from those possible attacks (John 17:6-18).

Since the ultimate price of being in a military institution is death, we too have identified that as the highest price to be paid by any missionary (whether on short-term or career missionary assignment) under the CMF. We “train our missionaries to die” (apologies to Ven. Bayo Famonure’s book, “Training to Die”). As part of the training,

orientation, and commitment to our missionaries, we emphasize the fact that missionary assignments involve risks and hazards and could lead ultimately to death.

Therefore, one of the “Statements of Commitment to and Affirmation of CMF Policies” that the prospective missionaries sign and communicate to their relatives states that, *“a missionary is prepared to die and be buried in the field of his/her assignment, and that should his relatives opt for the retrieval of his/her corpse for burial in their own place of preference, such relatives will be responsible for such retrievals.”* Such dis-

claimers are extended to other areas of social responsibilities in the light of the complicated and sensitive family issues in our African culture with regard to marriages, extended family relationships, number of children to be born by a couple, etc., as well as responsibilities for generating and disbursing support.

In spite of these, one of our missionaries from Ivory Coast sued the CMF in court, claiming compensation for the inconveniences he suffered while serving in the field for seven years under the CMF. The court awarded damages of FCFA350,000 (US\$700) against CMF. This was not a case of paying ransom for a kidnapped missionary, but paying damages for a missionary who felt inconvenienced by serving in a field where he did not get all the comfort he desired! <<