



## Benard Etapale Ajah

October 10, 1952 - October 12, 2015

### BIOGRAPHY OF DADDY BERNARD ETAPALE AJAH

Dear friends, thank you all for joining us this evening to honor the memory of our loving father, husband, grand-father, father-in-law, uncle, brother, and above all, friend. St Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians said in life, there are three things that remain: faith, hope and love and the greatest amongst them all is love. We are here this day to contemplate the sudden passing of Daddy Bernard Etapale Ajah but above all, to celebrate the love he shared the values he stood for and all the lessons he taught us.

In the small village of Mbat, Bangem, in the year 1952 when Western Cameroon was still under British rule, a child was born to Ngonde Ojah Thomas, and Anastasia Dione, a farmer of modest means of the Elung clan. Ngonde, a man of peace, loved by many in his community was married to three wives. His first wife was barren. It was the second one that gave him the four children he ever had, Ngwesse Ajah and Berltha of blessed memory, Daddy Ajah Etapale Bernard and his younger sister Muke Ajah Ngoeh. Ngonde's third wife was the widow of his late brother he inherited as was the tradition at that time. She too had no child. Naturally therefore, in the absence of his older brother, who died at a very young age, Daddy became leader of the family and would later in life gather and cater for the children and grandchildren of his father Ngonde Thomas.

Young Bernard attended Ave Maria Primary School in Bangem from 1959-1965. He was an energetic, friendly and outgoing fellow. Like many other

children from the village, he did the four miles journey from school and back every day, climbing hills, crossing rivers and descending valleys. Ben as he was called was no 'sisi boy'. He was such a brave guy, a real Spartan who never backed down from challenges from friends. He fought and defeated every bully who provoked him to a fight. A scar at the centre of his chest resulted from a bite he received from a friend who was losing a fight to him. When he was done with primary school, Bernard left his village for Fako division where he attended St Paul's teachers training college in Bonjongo. He continued his training later at the Regina Patris grade two teachers training college, in Mutengene in 1968. After acquiring his diploma, in 1970, the Catholic Education secretariat posted him to St Julius primary school Akum for his first teaching job. From St Julius primary school Akum, he was posted to Awing and then to Balikumbat. He was later posted to Bishop Rogan Primary School small Soppo. It was at Small Soppo that he decided to change his career path. After serving the Catholic education system for fourteen years, he decided he wanted better for his family and like any man who is not afraid of change, he got enrolled into Ecole Normale Supérieur de Police in Yaounde (National Police School) to train as a police officer which he later became. Daddy fit into the police force like a square peg in a square hole. He took so much delight in his new profession that one could say he was born for it. Several testimonies of his excellent work are on the lips of many in cities where he served and he would go on to receive a medal of honor recognizing his service to the police force in May 1997 in Ekondo Titi, Ndian Division. After his police training, "IP Ajah" as he was called by some was transferred to Mamfe, Otu, near the borders of Nigeria, and later to his home town of Bangem where he served as the chief of the police post there. From there he was posted to Kumba where he decided to make his base. From Kumba, he was posted to Bamusso, Ekondo Titi, and Buea. Daddy was always excited to work wherever he was sent. He turned each and every one of these places into homes seen from the strong bonds of friendship he retained and the ease with which he integrated into those communities. Regardless of tribe and

tongue, Daddy was friendly to everybody. A man of the people indeed he was. In the year 2001 he was privileged to be called up for further training in the police force after which he was promoted to the rank of assistant commissioner of police. Though this was long overdue, he accepted his lot, rejoiced and continued to serve diligently. In my father, I saw a strong, diligent and determined humble man who was ready to fight all odds to achieve his desired results. He would go the extra mile to protect his family. He was a man who understood that peace with all men and the will to change is the only true source of happiness.

The life of Daddy would not be a success without the wonderful and exceptional wife God blessed him with. Mama Lydia Epede Ajah. Together, they raised their children and several others from their compound families. Besides their professional jobs, they set up business, worked hard on the farms and gave the best education and Christian training to their children. Like the biblical father Abraham, Daddy Ajah was a father of many. He never relented, supporting children who were not biologically his. He came to understand in his last days that true joy could only come from the Lord. His love for progress and improvement of his community led him to become pioneer president of the Mbat Cultural and Development Association National. Under his leadership and the support of his son-in-law Dr Eyong John, a health centre was built in Mbat to cater for the health needs of the population. In the year 2007 while working in the Buea Judicial Police his service to government came to an end, he was retired. But as they say-retired but not tired. Like the active person that he was, he found ways of making use of his energy and pursuing his happiness. He spent more time looking after his farms, renovating his village home where his ailing step-mother still lived. He committed time to the St. Anthony Catholic church where he was a member of the financial committee helping to count church offerings. He also became very active in the Divine Mercy prayer group. For the most part of his life, he was a staunch member of the Catholic Church; served as a catholic school

teacher, sent almost all his children to catholic schools and even wished for some of them to serve as priests or nuns. However towards the last years of his life he abandoned the dogma of the Catholic Church to pursue a personal relationship with his God and enjoy true happiness. He always expressed his true fulfillment with his new born-again experience. Daddy was a man who always followed his heart regardless of the price. He knew how to be happy and would do whatever it took to be happy. His faith in Christ and personal spiritual life which he found in the evangelical church at Christ Embassy transformed his life tremendously. He was clearly disillusioned by the catholic faith and even remarked at one point: "that it was rather unfortunate that the catholic priests are not born-again" a statement which brought him some enemies in the catholic circles. When God calls someone as was the case with Abraham, he separates him from his people. We have now come to grips with the fact that Daddy's move to the USA a little over two years ago was less of a physical pleasurable trip and more of a spiritual separation. In the shelter of the eagles' wing chapel of the redeemed Christian church of God, Dover, DE he grew in faith tapping deeper and deeper into the whole essence of righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Ghost. It is now only dawning on us that it was God's plan to preserve his soul by stopping him from making that journey to Cameroon this December.

There are many lessons we learnt from Daddy; hard work, tolerance, patience, kindness and friendliness. It was in his nature to relate with all peoples and enjoy every moment with everyone. He was a man who understood that happiness could only come with change. He was always ready to give up his opinion and follow the voice of reason when he realized someone else was right. Daddy was definitely not without his own share of weaknesses. We assume that he hurt some people. It's hard to come of such age without stepping on some toes along the way. On his behalf, we ask anyone who had a grievance against him to relent and follow after peace with us.

At a man's end, he wants to know all his effort to raise his children did not go

in vain. Daddy's return on investment is positive and he was a successful man. Even when alive he never failed to count his blessings. When a man raises 7 biological children, dozens of others, and he has two medical doctors, 1 magistrate, 2 nurses, 1 entrepreneur to bury him, he is indeed successful. But the sweetest part of his success is that he died in the peace of the Lord, for what we know, he is in heaven. While some may be disillusioned by the method with which he had to exit this world, may it be known by all that we his children and family know it is God's will. People tend to get so comfortable with the flesh that they fail to realize that what is important to God is the salvation of our souls. The body of Jesus Christ was disfigured to the point that he was not comely to look upon. But then his true glory was revealed when he rose from the dead. My prayer for all here is that we lose confidence in these fickle bodies of ours and focus more on our spiritual selves. A new day is dawn for Daddy; he is where days will never come to an end. We will miss his comic personality. We know the heavenly hosts get comedy reliefs as they have gained a new comedian. We love you Daddy. We do not see you, but you are everywhere around us to watch and protect us. We will see you again when God says so.

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