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VANGUARD

Nigeria: How 20-Member Gang Struck, Killing Two Pastors, Two Others

Emma Amaize and Sam Eyoboka

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Robbers unleashed terror on a Warri based church, penultimate Friday, killing four persons and carting away valuables. IN the early hours of Friday,

November 21, men of

the underworld did a most unholy thing in the oil city of Warri, Delta State. They invaded God's Kingdom Society (GKS), aka The Church of the Living God, with headquarters at Salem City, killed four persons in cold blood, two of them, ministers of the gospel, Brother S.E. Evueh and Brother O.R. Dada. The other two were a laity member, who apparently came to spend the night in the sanctuary of the Living God and a security guard, Kingsley. Besides the blood-cuddling murder, the brigands robbed the children of God, including their guests, of money and valuables at gunpoint after scaring the night-time out of them.

For 130 minutes, that is two hours, 15 minutes, the robbers, numbering about seven, according to the police, held the GKS community hostage. Members of the church who played unwilling host to the intruders, however, swore they numbered between 15 and 20 and they shot at random, as they moved from one block to the other, robbing the residents with no scrap of fear.

GKS Headquarters, Warri.

In the book of Malachi, chapter 3, verse 8, Prophet Malachi, the last of a number of divinely inspired men, who, over a period of a 1000 years, foretold the first advent of Jesus Christ, asked the question, "Will a man rob God?" The Almighty Himself, who put the words in his mouth, answered the riddle thus, "Yet, you have robbed me!" and went ahead to capture the bewilderment of man concerning His retort this way, "But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?'"

His words: "In tithes and offerings," and, in this case, God was robbed. But it is even more sacrilegious in the sense that the robbers who raided the Warri church did not only fail to pay their own tithes to God in order for Him to open the windows of heaven for them, they opted to steal the tithes and offerings that were already in His storehouse and, to worsen the bad situation, they flouted God's law of "Thou shall not kill," by killing His anointed ones.

If anyone is happy about the ugly episode of November 21, it is Satan, who, according to the book of John, chapter 10, verse 10, is a thief that came "not only to steal, and to kill, but to destroy." Belial, the principality or evil angel who loves to destroy people and see them die, whose main objective is to cause war, and death, Magog, the god of war, who works with the former to cause bloodshed and provide blood for the demon world, must also be salivating over their exploits.

But the president of the GKS, Brother Emmanuel Aighalua, who should know better by virtue of his ecclesiastic authority, told Sunday Vanguard that, contrary to the plan of Satan, the church was not ignorant of his devices and is not afraid of he, "who can only destroy the flesh", but



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believe muscularly in Jesus Christ, "who came that they may have life and have it more abundantly by His death and resurrection."

Investigations by Sunday Vanguard showed that the church was thrown into mourning within the first 24 hours of the incident but, as soon as it dawned on the worshippers that the attack was a design by the enemy to destroy them, postpone and even abandon its 2008 Feast of Tabernacles, scheduled for December 14, they shook off the lethargy and resolved to become more zealous in the work of God.

Publicity secretary of the church, Brother Benedict Hart, in a press statement, hours after the impudent invasion, noted, "In the meantime, Salem City is wearing a mournful look as members of the church and sympathizers continue to troop into the compound to sympathize with the victims.

The state governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, has already called the GKS president, Brother O.E. Aighalua, to express his condolences and sympathies to the church over the incident. Calls have been coming from members and non-members of the church from different parts of the world to commiserate with the church over the tragic incident."

But by Monday, November 24, when Sunday Vanguard visited Salem City, the gloom that was on the faces of some worshippers the previous day when Aighalua delivered the soul-stirring sermon, asking them not to be ignorant of the devices of the enemy, who had come to sow a seed of doubt and question their trust in God, as he did to Job in the Bible, gave way to hope and confidence in the power of the Almighty to fight and deliver them from the antics of the evil one.

How they struck: Hart, in the statement announcing the robbery, said: "Dare-devil armed robbers early this morning besieged Salem City, Warri, the headquarters of God's Kingdom Society (GKS), killing two ministers of the church, a laity member and a security guard. No fewer than 15 to 20 heavily armed robbers invaded the expansive compound at about 2.00 a.m., shooting indiscriminately and robbing residents in various blocks of the compound.

In the process, they killed two ministers of the church (names withheld) and a middle-aged male member of the church who came in to spend the night as a guest in one of the blocks in the compound. The wife of one of the senior ministers of the church received head injuries from shrapnel that flew in various dimensions as the robbers blasted her room key with their gun in order to force the door open.

"The robbers", the GKS spokesman went on, "raided the houses of eight of the residents and were insistently asking for money. They gave no heed to the pleas that the ministers had no money to give, as they are not paid salaries. The victims parted with all sorts of valuables, including cash, handsets, jewellery and wristwatches and so on.

The robbers left at about 4.15 a.m. through the fence at the back of the church compound, having cut the spiral wire that was used to secure the concrete wall between the GKS and College of Commerce, Warri. The police later came to see things for themselves and to begin investigations into the incident. The bodies of the dead have been taken to the mortuary while the injured persons are receiving treatment."

Bloodshed: The killing of the ministers, laity member and a guest was the first time blood was being shed in the compound since it was founded in October, 1934 by the late Saint Gideon Meriodere Urhobo, who forsook the gods of his fathers and began as early as his school days to study the Holy Bible and resigned his appointment as a third-class clerk and telegraphist at the Posts and Telegraphs Department when he was baptized by the Holy Spirit to establish the GKS. Sunday Vanguard was told that before now, what the members of the church were used to were petty thieves that robbed in the neighbourhood and people come in and go freely out of the premises because it is a house of God and it was assumed that no sane man would want to invade such a place.

And so when the bandits stormed the sanctuary, November 21, the church members were shocked beyond words at the sophistication of the weapons of death brought by the gangsters. "Not even during the war when the soldiers came here in search of Igbo people did the church witness such a sadistic display," Hart asserted.

The death of the GKS members was not, however, the first time Christians have been killed in Warri. Bandits have, several times, invaded churches in Warri and other parts of Delta State and killed men of God. Robbers go

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on killing spree in Nigeria. Some months ago, the Christian community and the Nigeria Police in Delta State bore the brunt of armed robbers who shot dead a Catholic priest and two mobile policemen in separate armed robbery attacks in the state. The attacks happened at Isiokolo, Etiope East Local Government Area and Orhuwhorun, Udu LGA.

Our source said that the two mobile policemen were killed by the same gang of robbers who had earlier shot dead the Catholic priest just in front of Isiokolo Council secretariat and adjacent to a magistrate court in the area. The priest, identified as Revered Father John-Mark Ikpiki, was on his way to Isiokolo, where he was to mediate in an accident case involving a worker with a Catholic Church owned magazine, Messenger of Peace. The source said that the armed bandits shot the priest point blank on the forehead and thereafter dragged him out of his car with registration number EH 447 SMK, and made away with it.

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