

**SYNOD MOTION PROPOSED DURING THE SYNOD SESSION OF THE FIFTH SYNOD  
OF DIOCESE OF ABA NGWA NORTH BY THE VENERABLE EMMANUEL E. EGBULEFU  
(Ph.D) AT ST. GABRIEL'S CHURCH UMUODE ON THURSDAY 15TH - SUNDAY 18TH  
OCTOBER, 2020**

**SYNOD THEME: "WE ARE ... BUT DUST" GEN. 3:19, 1COR. 15:47**

My Lord Bishop, the President of the Synod,  
The Rt. Rev'd Nathan C.O. Kanu (Ph.D, JP)  
Princess Mrs. Odionyenfe Kanu (Mama Aba Ngwa North),  
President of the M.U; W.G. & G.G.,  
The Chancellor, Registrar and all Legal Luminaries,  
House of Clergy,  
Noble Knights and their Ladies,  
Distinguished Synod Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

**FELICITATION:** I crave your indulgence to say "thank you" to my Lord Bishop and Mama Aba Ngwa North for this rare opportunity and honour given to me to propose this year's synod motion. I really appreciate this gesture, thank you very much.

**INTRODUCTION:** A quick retrospection of my lord's synod themes in the past in comparison with that of this year will surely convince you that the choice of these themes is primarily for the glory of God, for edification and renewal of people's lives. It is also for church growth, community transformation and for the healing of our nation. In addition, I am also bold to say that these synod themes has been prophetic, historic, educative, informative and powerful through the energizing influence of the Holy Spirit to awaken a sleeping church from slumber and laziness to zealously and lively faith.

We have been taught in diverse ways how to face or overcome our challenges and responsibilities both in the church and the society as well. We have through these teachings been delivered from shallow spirituality and poverty mentality which pays little or no attention to Bible study, Evangelism, hospitality, praying and fasting into a life of appreciating God's goodness and faithfulness. Having said this, I call us to wisely reflect on our synod theme this year - "**WE ARE ... BUT DUST**". Let us ponder briefly on the key words:

**"WE ARE"** ... "We", is a pronoun (used as the subject of a sentence, the people who are speaking, the speaker and one or more others. The speaker uses the pronoun to speak to himself or to other people. It could be used for bishops, presidents, governors, royals, (kings) and others in their representative capacity in formal proclamation to a nation or for group of persons. For instance, in Anglican Communion the Bishop is alone in his own house followed by the house of clergy and the laity. Any decision taken by the bishop is binding on the rest of the houses when the bishop speaks then "we" have spoken. However in the existing context, "we are" refers to all those made by God in His own image and likeness, it applies to every human being in the whole universe, all descendants of Adam irrespective of their colour, creed or culture. It is for human beings of whom the Bible describes with words like "soul", "body", "mind", "spirit" and "heart". All categories of

mankind in every generation, male or female student, teacher, doctor, nurse, trader, planner, architect, an engineer or builder, clergy or laity, sinner or saint. It could be “you” or “I” who are subject to death. Therefore there is no exemption, all have sinned, all must die.

The dots ... primarily stands for missing words in the proclamation of God’s judgment against Satan represented by the snake, His just judgment and indignation against Eve and lastly on Adam. It also reminds us that many things abounds in human life very difficult to comprehend except by divine revelation or proper research if we are humble enough to agree with our creator, critics or teachers. There is no perfection in this world, life is full of omissions, mysteries and challenges spiritually, sociologically and mentally.

### **WHAT IS DUST?**

Etymologically, the word “dust” is from Old English word “donst”, a dried earth reduced to powder, other dry materials from fusion proto Germanic “dusta” (dust”) and “dusta”, mist, dust, evaporation) both Proto-Indo European “dewh” (to smoke raise dust”) it’s cognate with Scots (“dust”) (pollen dust). Iceland dust, Latin “Fumus” (smoke, steam). It is also related to Swedish “dun” (“down”, “huff”). Dust is made up of fine particles of solid matter on earth which generally consists of particles in the atmosphere that comes from various sources such as soil lifted by the wind (an aeolian process) volcanic eruptions and pollution. Dust in homes is compound of 50% skin cells. The rest and in offices and others composed of small amounts of plant pollen, human and other animal hairs) textile fibers, paper fibers, minerals from outdoor soil, burnt meteorite particles and many other materials which may be found in the local government. It has also been confirmed by both secular science and the scriptures that man was formed from dust. Thus according to A.E. Wilder, Smith, “The necessary information to build man does not reside in the few elements it takes to compose him”.

God breathed into man the breath of life. The terms spirit and breath is His spirit. God exhaled His breath into the body that He had formed, giving man not only an earthly origin but a divine one. Therefore man’s physical nature cannot merely be explained by the components, that is to say that, he/she cannot be reduced to in a science laboratory because man includes genetic information. Genetic information cannot arise spontaneously, nor does matter itself operate itself into organizing itself into higher levels of complexity (functioning systems, tissues, bones, organs). Answers in Genesis has more information and “Genetics and Biblical events”, and also the complexities of human DNA. It’s not the elements (dust) that we’re made of that makes us human; it is put together with purposeful design and complex organization.

In the words of Gary Parker, the orderly and complex human design phenomena is explained this way:

“If cells are continually supplied with the right kind of energy and raw materials, and if all 75% - plus of the RNA and protein molecules required for DNA - protein “translation” are present in the right places at the right times in the right amounts with the right structure. The

cells make proteins by using DNA's base series... Thus living beings operate in understandable ways that can be described in terms of scientific laws - but, such observations include properties of organization that logically imply a created origin of life. There are many more levels of order than I had once imagined and that order in nature, a mind in tune with it, were guaranteed by God Himself".

### **SPIRITUAL MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF DUST**

The signification of dust is that which is damned. Dust denotes that which is damned because the places where evil spirits are, at the time beneath the soles of the feet appear as land, and in fact as land untilled and dry, under which are certain hells. This land is called damned land, and the dust there signifies that which is damned. It has sometimes been granted to people to see that the evil spirits shook off the dust there from their feet, when they desire to give anyone damnation. This was seen to the right a little in front in the border towards the hell of the magicians where spirits are cast into their hell who during their life time have been in the knowledge of the faith and because they lived a life full of evil and it is by means of that dust that signified what is damned and by shaking off the dust damnation. It was from this signification that the Lord commanded His disciples to shake off the dust of their feet if they were not received as in Matthew:

1. Dust being the material out of which God is said to have formed man (Gen. 2:7), it became a symbol of man's frailty (Psalms 103:14) "for He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (compare Gen. 18:27, Job 4:19 etc) and of his mortality (Gen. 3:19) "Dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return" (see Job 34:15, Ps. 104:29; Eccl. 3:20, 12:7, etc. It is also used figuratively for the grave (Psalms 22:15, 19; 30:9; Daniel 12 vs 2).
2. Such actions as to lie in the dust, to sprinkle dust on the head, are symbols expressive of deep humiliation, abasement or lamentation (e.g. Job 27:30; Micah 7:17; Rev. 18:19). Hence such expressions as He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, i.e., "out of their states of lowliness (1Sam. 2:8; Psalms 113:7).
3. Throwing dust was an action expressive of extraction. Thus Shimei "cursed" David and threw stones at him and cast dust" literally, "dusted him with dust" (2Sam. 16:13). So the crowd which Paul addressed at Jerusalem manifested their wrath against him by tossing about their garments and casting dust into their air" (Acts 22:23).
4. Shaking the dust off one's feet against anyone (Matt. 10:14; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5; 10:11; Acts 13:51) is symbolic of renunciation, as we would say "washing one's hands of him", an intimation that all further intercourse was at an end. It was practiced by the Pharisees on passing from Gentile to Jewish soil, it being a rabbinical doctrine that the dust of a heathen land defiles.

The expression "Yahweh will make the rain of thy land powder and dust" (Deut. 28:24) means "the dust in consequence of the drought shall fall down" instead of

the rain on the dry ground. In Judea and vicinity during a sirocco, the air becomes filled with sand and dust, which are blown down by the wind with great violence.

**THE SYNOD MOTION** asserts that man as a creature has continued to prove that he is not just ultimate of all creation but that he rules and controls the affairs of all other creatures. Man's progressive physical, psychological and technological advancement continues to prove this fact confirming that man is fearfully and wonderfully made. However the inevitable presence of pain and eventual end of man reveals the very truth about man's existence on earth - "that all men are nothing but dust".

This year's synod theme is very important. It reveals that anybody writing or speaking about it has an important message that should be adhered to hence it is a treasure given to us in earthen vessels (II Cor. 4:7). It is all about life given to mankind by God to live and never to die. If man had cherished and carefully protected it. There are many who are becoming extra-ordinarily wicked and destructive. Many people are only concerned about their own rights and welfare whereas others are helpless wondering of what this life is all about. Man's control over the natural world and his ability to harness its abundant resources to his own personal advantage is growing daily. He has developed self-confidence in himself as the Lord of the universe. He could boast of himself that there are no problems which scientific technology could not solve. Religiously man has contributed a lot in leading people to the path of moral rectitude despite obvious lapses. The paradox of religion is captured by the words of Cavendish thus:

Religious have taught men and women how to lead their lives on earth and have given them hope for a happier life after death. They have supported human beings in times of danger, pain, bewilderment and despair. They have inspired nobility, self-sacrifice, courage and endurance and they have also inspired wars, persecutions and abominable cruelty. They have created compelling and magnificent rituals and a massive wealth of literature, architecture, art, music and philosophy. Great civilizations have grown up around them ...

Philosophically man had taught that he could approach God or create a loving relationship between God and all mankind by means of his logic, criticisms, new theories and literature, however the world through his wisdom did not know God (1Cor. 1:21) it is not an insult to philosophy or philosophers if I tell them that philosophical arguments and rationalization such as the doctrine of mindless, purposeless, creatorless evolution that has no fear of God and without any hope for humanity is nothing but a mirage which will attract God's judgment for their propagators. In order to solve the problem of evil, sufferings, pains, alienation, enmity, misapprehension or mistrust, God did not present a philosophy or a theory but a person - and that person is God Himself, incarnate in Jesus Christ, He is God's Reason brought near for human salvation.

Now (God) commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed and of this

he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead  
(Acts 17:30-31).

Scientifically modern scientific techniques are being developed to heal diseases and to relieve mankind of pains and sufferings. Scientists have now progressed so rapidly in terms of chemistry, physics and biology for the prolongation of the biological life even after the body is dead and the spirit is departed. Their ability to combat human diseases have led them to advance in their research to battle against diseases that threaten human life. However, the persistence of death, pains, sorrows and incurable diseases have left them almost impotent and undecided except to accept and confess God's omnipotency as a perfect and gracious Healer of sickness, when they admit by saying - "we diagnose but God heals".

Technologically, human beings have been empowered by the creator to work with the world and to create. The life of human beings through fall and redemption also involves shaping and forming the earth, moving from the garden into a city. Technological advancements as "a science of "how to" do something encompasses all thermo-nuclear bombs to making love, from the service we render to our starving neighbour to writing articles. Think about aeroplanes and people going to the moon and you seeing them "life" in your living rooms. What about computers, robots, light and heat in our homes when we switch on or off our light? Lives of men and women especially in developed nations of the world have been patterned to operate under rhythms of machines and they are almost under complete control of our lives economically and technologically. All of their effort notwithstanding most of all their achievements remains "natural" and sometimes "neutral" especially when like Satan they feel like "gods" and even think of making God in human image. This is a contradiction - this is idolatry, "a curse" and a false manipulation of modern technology. Man in his skill and techniques must be prepared to accept human life is not complete outside God.

### **THE PROBLEM OF PAIN OR SUFFERING IN THE WORLD**

The New Webster's Dictionary describes "pain" as "an unpleasant sensation caused by the stimulation of certain nerves especially as a result of injury or sickness". It could be a distressing emotion. A typical example is that of a woman during child birth (birth pangs). It could also be referred to as punishment when a person is under pains. A complete Christian Dictionary for Home and School defines "pain" as "suffering" or "distress" of the body" it is a situation in which someone may be "caused to have pain in the mind or body". It means that "trouble" times of war, catastrophe often lead people to doubt or question the ways of God. Such situations may cause such grief and pains that a reaction can come which says "if life is as evil as this, how can we believe in a God who is omnipotent and also want the best for us? Such reactions may still arise in times of mass epidemic or great natural disaster such as earthquake. It is an ageless question: why should a good God allow his children to suffer, why can't he eradicate it? If He is able or if He is kind, why should He permit it? So many incurable sick people are handicapped in hospitals, there are many innocent children suffering and so many human beings are completely denied of joy, happiness and love in our families. All these adds to the expression of bleeding (wounded) minds. However, it is really understandable that God has given us a beautiful world and life to enjoy. He causes His sun to shine and showers to fall so that the earth produces enough food for human needs. He also gave us men of

wisdom who are scientifically, technologically and medically advanced. He has given us good families and friends to enjoy so as to cure our problem of loneliness. We can boldly testify that his goodness and mercy have delivered us from the valley of the shadow of death. So He is a good God. However, many people think that the existence of evil or suffering in the world shows that there is no God, or if there is God, He is isn't kind. The story of Genesis chapter 3 reminds us that God made a perfect world but evil entered when man disobeyed God. This disobedience is known as the fall. And such a fall brought a catastrophe which severed the good relationship man had with God and other creatures.

Again, since God gave man a free will, the ability to make a choice, it means that man is responsible for the evil because of his choice. Others also think that God uses the suffering in the world to develop human beings or as a kind of test. However others still claim that since God knows everything right from the beginning he doesn't need to test man this way. From the biblical scene, Satan (Devil) is the cause of evil and always encourage people to do evil and also attacks human beings with all kinds of sickness and disaster. Job is an example of a good and holy man whom Satan attacked with evil disease. Again, Jesus the son of God the second Adam, sinless and holy God incarnate also suffered and died in terrible pains. At last God proved His power to heal and deliver in their lives.

All the same a typical example that medical science, technological, and philosophical expertise of man is not able to save mankind is the recent covid-19 pandemic which originated in Wuhan China November 2019, up till now have defied any medical attention. It is a disease we know have claimed lives of thousands of people globally and yet because we are serving a good God, we are still alive. What about the problem of cancer, H.I.V and death which has got no solution yet?

#### **THE PROBLEM OF DEATH:**

Death is the separation of the immaterial man from the material; the departure of the soul from the body. With this we discover that while the soul is one with the body, the two are also separable. That is to say when we trace the origin of the first man whom God moulded from the dust and breathed into it the breath of life to become a living soul, the body and the soul are both separable and inseparable. The moulded body of man without God's spirit or breath is incomplete. Likewise man's soul and body at death can be separated, though they are still one entity and compliments each other. It is just like saying that removal of an engine from a car makes it two but it is understandable that a vehicle without an engine is motionless but both the engine and the body remains one vehicle. In the same manner when the soul of man leaves the body it cannot function for the body becomes dead. However death is not the end of co-existence because man without the body is not complete. Death only ends human activity here on earth but the soul continues to live in the unseen world. That's why during interment at the graveside, we hopefully confess: "earth to earth", "ashes to ashes" and "dust to dust" while the soul returns to the Maker.

There is therefore a saying that every mountain has a peak and sometimes the summit could be visible from a distance and a times covered by lower peaks and slopes though we are sure of its existence we walk by faith be assured that we are almost at the top. For all those who follow Jesus Christ walking along the narrow

way, being committed in his kingdom business, one day there is going to be a complete “metamorphosis” (an irreversible change of one substance into another). Just as a butterfly is a metamorphosed caterpillar. “Do not be conformed to this world says Paul, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. According to the scriptures, there shall be a resurrection of the body and the mortal puts on immortality, the imago Dei, the image of God will be restored within a new environment. As for believers in Christ, both soul and body shall be perfected in the resurrection whereas the wicked will suffer both soul and body in eternal fire.

**CONCLUSION:** Therefore having examined and enumerated all the aforementioned achievements of man as a creature of God though wonderfully and fearfully made, I am truly convinced that despite his progress and advancement physically, psychologically and technologically man has not been able to eradicate the presence of pain and the eventual end of man in this world which reveals the truth that “all men are nothing but dust”. Therefore, I call on the second session of the Fifth Synod of the Diocese of Aba Ngwa North to rise with the declaration and assertion that man on earth, with all his power, greatness and advancement in life is nothing but a mere dust which vanishes into the air taking nothing with him. And so enjoins all men and women, young and old to use every opportunity and position they have in life for the wellbeing of others and service of Christ Jesus, and so secure eternal life for themselves in the kingdom of God. I so move.

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