

DIOCESE OF ABA NGWA NORTH
(Anglican Communion)

**A PAPER PRESENTED BY RT. HON. MARTIN AZUBUIKE, SECONDING THE
SYNOD MOTION FOR THE 1ST SESSION OF THE 5TH SYNOD OF DIOCESE OF
ABA NGWA NORTH, HELD AT ALL SAINTS' CATHEDRAL CHURCH ABAYI
UMUOCHAM, FROM THURSDAY 10TH – SUNDAY 13TH OCTOBER, 2019.**

The President of the Synod,
Rt. Rev'd Nathan C. O. Kanu, PhD, JP,
The Bishop's Wife, Princess (Mrs.) Odionyenfe Kanu, JP, (Mama Aba Ngwa North)
The Chancellor, Hon. Justice Innocent Nwabughogu, KSC
Members of the Legal Team
The Revered Clergy of the Altar
Synod Delegates
Distinguished guest, Ladies and Gentlemen,

GREETINGS:

I was so humbled when I received the invitation of my Lord Bishop through his emissaries, first by inviting me as a guest to his Synod, and secondly, asking me to second the motion of this Synod. And when I discovered that this Synod is the First in the series of the life of a Synod, I was so excited, for such an honour extended to me by the Bishop, and entire faithful of Diocese of Aba Ngwa North, my Lord Bishop and wife I thank you so much for such a privilege given to me and my family, the good Lord who you serve would bless you, and favour you with every good blessing all the years of your Episcopacy and to the Planning Committee we are grateful.

My Lord Bishop, and the Synod I was most trilled when I read the words of the motion, it is a complete eye opener considering the height of expectation God has towards the Church. But most disappointedly, the Church of our time has failed from their responsibility. To every member of the Diocese, and all Christian at large, greater task has been placed on all of us resulting from this Synod theme and its motion. This implies that we have no excuse now that we have been made to know what we are called to do. The theme of the Synod is challenging, and wake up call to every Anglican in particular, and the nation at large.

My Lord Bishop, I wish to commend the ability, wisdom and grace of God upon your life for the choice of such a theme which many Church leaders of our time would not want to discuss due to their relationship to the things of the world, and turn-over they received from the political leaders of the day. The compromise of the Church with the world even when the Church should be changing the world is a serious act of betrayal to God.

The content of the Synod motion and its implication in today's world view demands an immediate intervention and attention by every sincere child of God.

THE GENESIS:

Beginning from creation, God elected man above every other creator with the intention that man would represent, serve, obey, and fellowship with Him alone without any other. Man was made to take the lead in every good deed following the image of God, he carries. The story in Gen. 3 robbed man this exalted and glorious position, thereby failed to manifest the image of God which is given to keep his life and environment under his control. The failure of man towards the divine plan became the foundation to the decay and compromise the present Church has found herself.

THE CHOICE OF ABRAHAM AND HIS OFFERINGS:

God in His divine plan to have a distinguished class of people who should be set aside for Him continued His search through the call of Abraham who became the father of the Jewish nation. The preferment of the Jews against other nations could be seen as another way God was looking for a group who would set the pace in showcasing His goodness, who would not bow down in worship to another things in the name of their God, nor abuse the name of God by preferring God's name over themselves, but rejects or transform His image in them into another thing. The allied nations in the era of Jewish nation where those who had no regard or recognition to God as their creator, they were living their lives outside and in total opposition of the ordinances of God to the man He created. The choice, and history of the Jewish race to humanity could be seen as among the preparations or rather move God made in search for an agent of change to restore back the lost man whom He created in His own likeness. The given of the two tablets of stone with the written of the ten commandments to the Jews was purposely done to restore the godliness, worship of the one and only true God, to unite in love, and peaceful coexistence of one another in total respect and value of God's image in man, which later became the religion, way of life and the identity of the Jews. According Rt. Rev'd Prof. Augustine O. Iwuagwu, the religion of the Jewish people was one great contribution of the Jewish race to the development of human race. The Jewish Sacred Literature, the Bible laid the foundation of Christianity. In defining the theology of the Jewish people, Prof. Iwuagwu revealed that the first dogma of Judaism (meaning the religion of the Jews), was the unity of God, which was in total contrast with the teachings and practices of the heathen world, were all forms of things were worshiped as god. As at these time, the Jews had learnt that God was one, universal, almighty, supreme, eternal, a personal living God who had direct relations with mankind, and whose name is Yahweh, a name that was too sacred to be uttered or speak of. Also, that their God is holy and righteous, who has moral qualities such as truth, justice, love, benevolence which gods of other nations do not have. The Jewish people were taught that their God want His

worshippers to be holy and righteous as He is, because they were made in His likeness, including those of other nations.

From the above context, it appeared very clear that the fall of man as have been mentioned earlier was a distortion to human race which must be fixed. The relationship of God and the Jews has also revealed the restoring process, His unexplainable kind of love, and divine picture for the total restoration plan to human race. From the Jewish sacred book – the Bible, the figure of a perfect man who would come as the Redeemer, a Messiah, an Anointed King, Prophet and Priest to lay the perfect example and restore the entire human race to the likeness of their creator was shown. The inability of the Jewish nation within the embodiment of the religious society in which they found themselves in the course of their existence, and the coming of the Messiah opened the door of humanity in bringing total restoration for the man and his image. The path to the life of perfection that man was created to be and live in has been set in place through Christ, who first lived a perfect and sinless life, and also taught his followers the principles of this perfection. The divine picture of a gathering, congregation, an assembly, the coming together or the set aside of a people, or a group for a special purpose, set principles, and different lifestyle has been made clearer through the connectivity of God, Abraham and Jewish people. The pictures we saw in the Old Testament of the holy book was revealed in full in the New Testament which brought in the conception, birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

RESTORATION PROCESS INTRODUCED:

Again, Jesus began His ministry by the chosen and calling of twelve men as his disciples, the search continued. The loss of the Jewish monarchy, and national independence during the ancient wars kept them mingling in the pluralistic religious society filled with all manner of inhuman, immoral, adulterous, and idolatrous environment. The chosen of the twelve by Jesus continued the search for the ideal religious state, a sacred congregation, and a people that would be marked as “The Called Out” from the world in order to put in place the true worship, and as the agent of the perfect change according to the ordinances of the one and only true God. As we all know, it is this twelve that later metamorphosed into the title which every one of us wear these days as if it is a cloth. The title “Christian” began as a nickname, but it was the mark of identity for those that were committedly following the lifestyle of Christ. The collapse of the Jewish state, and their captivity by the super powers of the era Babylon and Assyria took the Jews into the Greek speaking nations. In their uniqueness, the Jews went into dispersion with their identity and religion, as God fearers, they were law abiding, and this helped them a lot to penetrate into various places they were living, influencing the people around them with their religiosity. By this, they were favoured and accommodated even to the extent of building synagogues in those foreign places and cities where they lived, they influenced the people and communities with their religious

concepts. They were allowed to practice their religion in these foreign cities, and towns where they lived without any hindrance, they separated themselves from other ordinary people and activities of the society. The set of the Jews who exempted themselves from other societal influences or lifestyle were known as “the God fearers”, and they were found everywhere following their dispersion. Other inhabitants of the cities where the Jewish God fearers were living got attracted to their godly disposition and became converts, and were seen as Gentile God fearers. The Jews in diaspora were called the Hellenists because they had adopted the culture and language of the Greek people, and also took Greek names. With their knowledge of the common Greek dialect which spread everywhere, they were able to translate the Old Testament Bible into Greek, called the Septuagint, or the translation of 70 scholars, done between third and second centuries B.C in the city of Alexandria.

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH:

The Christian Church which was founded on the Day of Pentecost within the year 29 AD (AD stands as After the Death of Christ) was greatly embraced by the Hellenists, or rather the God fearers. The conversion recorded in Acts 2 through the preaching of Peter during the celebration of the Jewish festival of Pentecost were more of the Hellenists. The Hellenists from the beginning of the Church were mostly attracted and attached to the Good-News, i.e. the Gospel. These set of the Jews according to the history of the Church became ardent Missionaries. It is also believed that the appointment of the Seven Deacons as in Acts 6 came from this class. Apostle Paul though he schooled in Jerusalem, the principles of the Pharisees is believed to come from the Hellenists class, since his home was in Tarsus of Cilicia. Through the spread of the Hellenists in the Old Roman Empire, the city of Antioch in Syria also took over Jerusalem as a Christian center following the activities and progress of Christianity in that city. It was at this city Antioch that the “nickname” Christians was given to Disciples of Christ. Following the train above, the uniqueness, the great truth of Jewish religion, their exclusiveness as a Sacred nation, the attraction they exerted to the world system which were morally bankrupt and Godless positioned the Church as the real agent of restoration to the lost world. For the world to have taken over the Church, leading her into extinction as this motion suggests is an aberration, a situation this Synod and Diocese of Aba Ngwa North is saying No to.

THE GREEK WORLD AND CHRISTIANITY:

It is important to note in this paper that before the birth of the Church, Greek Philosophies were widely emerging, thoughts on superstitions, mythology, problems in understanding the nature of God, his relation to the universe, the meaning and end of human life, and the ideals of human society were rising unchallenged. Also, other mysteries that rose up during the Greek era was the worship of the divinities of the lower world, which aimed at casting light and hope of life beyond the grave. The character of this mystery include – fasting, sacrifice, confession of sin,

ritual washings and a pagan sacrament to appease the Divinity, to pass through death into the life hereafter. The Greek ideology and philosophy could not provide solutions to the numerous mysteries they created, rather they lifted the hearts of men to look for God.

A whole lot was awaiting the Church to give answers to. It is also good to recall that the early days of the Church according to history saw her arising to show the way through the practical living and wholistic teaching of the undiluted principles of Jesus' teaching.

At the birth of the Church, the Roman Emperor ruled all countries around the Mediterranean. The Roman influence gave the early Church some kind of strength that inspires her teachers. This environment through the unity of the Roman laws, language and religion helped the Church to arrive to the formation of one Church, one faith.

The message of the Goodnews was spreading as it is recorded in the book of Acts, other Jews and non-Jews who embraced the Goodnews were admitted to the Church without circumcision while Jewish converts were still holding to the Mosaic laws, keeping of the Sabbaths, Feasts, Circumcision and rules concerning food. The Jewish Christians maintained that the Gentiles must pass through their laws of circumcision, and others before they can be fully admitted. To the Jewish Christians, the Sabbath day and the Lord's Day were observed, while the Gentile converts kept only the Lord's Day, the setting the young Church was passing through at this point of her existence. This struggle continued for a long time, freedom was highly anticipated. But the destruction of Jerusalem in the year AD 70 and other subsequent attacks scattered the Jews again, and equally tended to make the Judaic Christianity come to an end.

The above attack on the Jews and Jerusalem also affected the Church adversely as the young Church was accused by the Jews, a situation that brought the Church into severe persecution. The killing of the Apostles, and other hurtful situations would have finally ended the Church. Among the factors that held the Church from being completely destroyed were:

- The Apostolic writing
- The formation of the Creed
- Growth of Liturgy and forms of worship
- The Settlement of the official ministry

The above matters were presented, discussed and activated in Synods like what we are doing in this gathering. I pray and believed that as we are rising from this Synod, the Church must be delivered from the shackles of the world and worldliness in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Apart from persecution, another great danger that threatened the existence of the Christian Church was Heresy – (Self-willed Teachings). We can equally observe

that the reason the Church of our age has been engulfed by worldliness include the self-willed teachings of the present day Church leaders, through their misinterpretation of the scripture, and misrepresentation of the personality of Christ.

History equally revealed that the political leaders, the Emperors in their succession were unfair to the Christian Church. The Christian's refusal to bow and worship any other God introduced by the emperors made the state leaders to accuse the Church with all forms of evil.

The Church at this stage was alive to their faith as they stood against the wrong teachings and practices coming within, they totally refused any alliance with the political leaders who came with rules which stood against the teachings and principles of their faith no matter the threat or what was offered to them.

The rising of hierarchy in Church leadership and its antecedents was among the factors that showcased the Church in a bad image in the world system. The message of selfism, materialism and other vices exhibited by some of the leaders of the Church then and now has made the Church to appear worldlier than the world.

The metaphoric use of salt and light to describe the position that Church is called to occupy cannot be over emphasized in this Diocese of Aba Ngwa North, and I think this should be of every Christian and Christian body. The use of salt in what we eat, it's seasoning and medicinal qualities explain very vividly the taste the Church should give to the world and its practice. It also interprets that the cleanliness and protection against error, and decay is the sole responsibility of every Christian, and Christian Church.

The obviousness that the world and its leaders seem to be overtaken by darkness point to the fact the Church who should be lightening to the world has been extinguished. The guide and leadership the world needs are meant to be provided by the Church. The Lord of the Church Himself, Jesus Christ in the closing chapters of the Gospel, recorded by St. Matthew 28:18-20 charged His disciples with the above responsibility. He also assured them of His power and presence in doing this commission. Understanding this mandate well as a politician suggests to me that the Church should control what happens in the governance of our nation when we vote into power men and women who are credible, trustworthy, sincere, and testified Christians.

According to the theme text of this motion, John 17:14, 16, Jesus revealed that the word with which we must conquer the world and bring her to the ruler-ship of Christ has been provided to us. The identity and personality the Church should be has been brought to lime light. We should recall that most of Jews in their era of dispersion went down to the towns and cities of dwelling with their uniqueness, and where described as God-fearers.

The disciples of Jesus even in the midst of danger, persecution and death maintained and kept to the words of their Master, and we are mentioning in our Synod, so is also the same Jesus is talking to us in this gathering. The most worrisome of today's Church is the rate at which they are springing up in our environment, but very disappointedly, tasteless, and not even knowing where to go, much more of having the light. The conformity of the Church to the patterns of this world are seen around us even in this gathering.

The whole days of this Synod will not be enough to discuss the rottenness of the world and Church in their alliance.

This Synod is reminding the Church that no excuse would be reasonably enough to exonerate the Church from her compromise. The world system is busy instituting evil, immorality, materialism, selfism, wickedness, idolatry, godlessness, and all forms of ill human practice, while the Church, I mean Christians in turn are Christianizing them. Very recently in our media, a young lady was rewarded with a cash award of sixty million naira with other equipment, just for the sake of showcasing her nudity and other immoral activities in the social media. The one that worried me so much is that she bear a Christian name. This is just one among the myriads of such evil. Our Christian youths are into so many worldly practices just to get rich quick, politics and politicking is flourishing in our nation because of the way it is played, men and women of probity will not be giving the chance, the Church even plays anti-party against their members because of what have been promised or the bargain by the other candidate.

The call of this Synod to every Christian and Church is to shun all forms and patterns of this world in its entirety.

NOMINALISM:

The issue of nominalism which the Church as a body, and the individual members are suffering is one of the most dangerous state or position that kills and suffocates an organization, entity or a person. Anyone who lives only for name without any relevance is already dead. We were told that the followers of Christ were called Christians because the life of Christ was practically seen in their lives. The nickname as it was originally intended was not a mistake or an unconscious act on the lives of the disciples, because they knew what they were doing and whom they had followed. Can the Christians of today be said of such testimony, the answer is no. When you see anyone trying to act it, watch very closely there is something he/she is aiming at, the act is not real.

The same thing to the Church, as those said to have been called out of or from darkness, is the present day Church not seen as manufacturers of all kinds of darkness even beyond what the world has ever experienced. When a Church cannot speak with one voice, keep to a stand, do what is right at any time of the day not minding who is watching, such Church, or group is being cremated. Living only in name without any substance is no life at all. And very surprisingly, it is only

in the Christian fold is such position tolerated, every other social group, even the world itself does not tolerate nominalism.

According to the words of Bridget Willard which I obliged in its wholeness, and praying this Synod to uphold says “Church isn’t where you meet, Church isn’t a building. Church is what you do, Church is who you are, and Church is the human outworking of the person of Jesus Christ. Let’s not go to Church, let’s be the Church”.

His Lordship, the President of the Synod, and his wife, the lord Chancellor, the Legal luminaries of this great Diocese, my revered Clergy men of the altar, Synod delegates, and entire membership of this Diocese, I pray thee to join me with these few words of mine to second the motion of this 2019 Diocesan Synod, so I submit.