

DIOCESE OF ABA NGWA NORTH
(Anglican Communion)

**THE SYNOD MOTION PROPOSED AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTH SYNOD OF
THE DIOCESE OF ABA NGWA NORTH HOLDING AT ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC ABAYI-
UMUOCHAM FROM 10TH TO 13TH OCTOBER, 2019.**

Your Excellency, The President of the Synod.

Your Excellency the President of the Women Ministry

The Lord Chancellor and other the Legal Officers

The Clergy in their Ranks and Files

The Knights and Ladies of the Church

The Distinguished Synod Delegates

The Beloved People of God.

May I crave your indulgence to appreciate my father and our father, my mentor and our mentor, His Lordship, the Rt. Rev'd Nathan Chineneye Okechukwu Kanu Ph.D, the lord Bishop of this great Diocese, and his amiable wife, Princess (Mrs.) Odionyenfe Kanu (J.P), Mama Aba Ngwa North. Your Excellencies, my family appreciates you. And by extension all the organizer of this synod for giving me the rare opportunity to proposing this motion that says

“The efficacy of every agent of restoration - Medicines, Soaps, sanitizers, etc, is only ascertained by their ability to actually restore the lost condition of the subject/object they are sent to restore.

From inception, the church has been saddled with the responsibility of restoring the world to its lost state of godliness - the worship of the one true God, and love and peace among the people (Acts 1:8, Mt 5:13&16; 28:18-20). However, a look at the happenings around the world today, after over two thousand years of the inception of the church, clearly suggests, that the church has lost the power and

direction to fulfill her restoration mandate. Also, the clear and practical evidence of worldliness in the church confirms the fact that the church in her present state is incapable of fulfilling this mandate.

Therefore, in view of the above state facts, the first session of the Fifth synod of the Diocese of Aba Ngwa North rises with the motion that:

- a. The incessant growth of ungodliness in Nigeria in particular and the world at large is as a result of the church's failure to conform herself into the image of Christ who alone can through her bring about the needed restoration.*
- b. That God will continue to hold the church and her leadership responsible for the ungodliness in the world till she lives up to her responsibility. And, so the synod calls on Christians and Church leaders in Nigeria and across the world to diligently desire to conform to the image of Christ, move from just being nominal members and denominations of the church to becoming embodiments of the characters and virtues of Christ who is the Lord of the church"*

INTRODUCTION

The motion before us is apt, pertinent and timely especially at this time of *religion less Christianity and empty "Christianity"*. It is a time when the Church in all indications seems to have lost her power of conversion and restoration over the society for which she was called out to transform. We have arrived an age in church's history, when the responsible '*Ekklesia*' has turned to be irresponsible - having lost the vision of the mission for which she was created.

Ours is a time when we see churches and their branches in every nook and cranny of our localities with beautiful captions as names. We see 'pastors' and 'Men of God' in every family, thousands of them in every village. Every now and then millions of 'believers' and 'born again' Christians surge out in mass for fellowship

and ministries, yet the society where these things exist has received no improvement both in morality and spirituality. Maybe the allegations of Dr. Gary Maxey that ‘*Christianity in Africa is one mile wide but one inch deep*’ is true. It is this truth that Bishop Kanu saw in 2016 and in an open synod, cried out, “*How have the Almighty fallen, Must we continue like this*”? According to him, one of the things that has caused the fall of the church is her effort to turn God into a vending machine, having lost the Kerygma of the gospel. And, this has made the Church to only take a stand without making any move, thereby recruiting members who are just in the Church but not of the Church.

THE CHURCH AS THE EKKLESIA

At the early stage of Christianity, the church was known and called the ‘*Koriakon*’ which simply means ‘House of Fellowship’ or ‘the fellowship of those who believe in Christ’. Gradually as her influence over the world around her began to manifest, the name Ekklesia was chosen as befitting for her. The word, *Ekklesia* came from the classical Greek and was developed in Athens. It was used on the assembly of few Greek elites, meticulously chosen, whose responsibility was to control the Greek empire. Members of the Ekklesia were those known for their probity and nobility. They formulated ideologies that formed the lifestyle of every person. As few as they were, they controlled the military, the judiciary, the economy and the polity of the empire. In fact, their influence was unlimited. So, when the Church began to develop from just being a ‘*House fellowship*’ to a group of honourable men with resilient belief, whose message converted the people, and whose lifestyle influenced the society, the name, *Ekklesia* was chosen as her name. So Ekklesia was chosen because of the church’s power to influence, to control, to transform, to restore, to sanitize and to purify the world around her. As Ekklesia, the Church is divinely called out, of the world with the mandate of restoring it to its lost state of godliness. Little wonder, Jesus reminded His disciple, “...though you are in the world, you are not of the world (cf Jn. 17: 14&16).”

The Restoration Mandate Of The Church

The story of the origin of the world is both sweet and sour. According to Genesis, Account, it begins with the goodness of God’s handiwork, the free supply of

abundant life, the confidence and dominion given to man, to the privilege of Divine-human relationship. All these fizzled away as a result of man's blatant disobedience to God. Gradually but consistently, ungodliness replaced godliness. Then, God knew that the good world he made has been lost to Satanism. It was at this point that He began the process of restoration. In fact, the *Law* and the *Prophets* came as a preparation to the holistic salvation which was about to come. And, at the fullness of time, God Himself came down in the person of Jesus Christ. John describes it as the '*Logos*' or the *Word that became flesh* while Paul describes as the '*Kenosis*' or '*the emptying of the Godhead*'. It was this that gave birth to the church, the new Israel, and the Ekklesia, saddled with the responsibility of restoring the lost world to God. Speaking in agreement with this, Kanu (2016:49) says "*The church the new Israel was established by God, through the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ, to restore all mankind to their original state of Mightiness in God*". Webber (1986:18) says it in this way, "*The church is the primary extension of Christ in the world, with the primary responsibility of extending the benefits of Christ's life, death and resurrection to the world... Therefore in Christ the powers of evil are defeated, and the world is restored*". This is clearly seen in the words of Jesus as are captured in our Synod motion, "*You shall be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the utmost parts of the earth*" (Acts 1:8) Again, he says, "*you therefore into the world and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you...* (Matt 28:18-20). Therefore the church is the divinely appointed agent for spreading the kingdom, the realm and the rule of God throughout the world.

The Role of the Church in History in the Restoration Mandate

The early church was faithful to the above Restoration Mandate. Despite the persecution by the Jewish Authority, the church never shrank in this responsibility. By the end of AD.70 Christianity has conquered Judaism especially with the fall of Jerusalem. Then, she marched onward, towards Rome, having 'subtly' penetrated itself into Asia. Thousands of people, on daily basis, were leaving the old dirty way to accept the new life in Christ. The cruel persecution of the Church by different emperors of Rome which lasted for more than 250 years did not deter her. In fact, Boer (1976:44) tells us that the Roman senate under Nero regarded Christianity as

“religio illicita”, and as a result, *‘Christians risked their goods, their freedom, even their lives’*. The Church was not demoralized or discouraged rather she was resilient and obstinate, but optimistic that her responsibility of restoring the world will yield good result at last, for he who laughs last, laughs the best. So, she pushed on until she captured the highest Roman seat of Power in AD313. As a true Ekklesia, she influenced the Edit of Milan, and over-threw the worship of the indomitable sun-god, and indefatigable emperor-worship. By the end of the 4th century A.D, the ‘famous’ Imperial image and its worship because both unpopular and primitive, while the name of Christ became prominent, and controlled the policies and programmes of the Roman world. It was this breakthrough that inspired Dr. Isaac Watts when he said in his hymn that:

*Jesus shall reign where’re the sun
Does his successive journeys run
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and wane no more*

Furthermore, the church during her medieval Christianity influenced the whole of the West. Despite her attacks of Heresy and Schism, European paganism fell for Christ through the church’s instrumentality. In fact, the reformation of the Church especially the ones led by Martin Luther in Germany, John Calvin in Geneva, Thomas Crammer in England, and the counter-reformation led by Ignatius Layola, which introduced the Order of Jesus, returned back the morality of the church, and produced a society which was decent and modest. This helped the church to conquer the European Satanism of slavery and slave trade, in 1833, which had existed for more than 600 years. It was the same quest to liberate the entire world from such Satanism that gave birth to the Missionary Expedition in West Africa. On this, Agha (1992:67) maintains that:

Slave trade and its wickedness was one of the factors that brought the missionaries to West Africa. It was believed that with the establishment of Christianity in West Africa, it will help to fight slave trade in West Africa. As a result, most of the early missionaries were freed slaves.

Actually, since the middle of the 19th century A.D., when Christianity entered West African, especially Nigeria, a qualitative restoration of the Nigerian Society has been recorded. A close study of events reveals that through the visionary leadership of the Mission church, slave trade, killing of twins and human sacrifice of all sorts have been abolished. More so, fetishism, syncretism, occultism, palmistry, sorcery, necromancy and divination have all reduced. In the same vein, adultery and polygamy, oat-taking and libation, cult and masquerades have all been discouraged. People who passed through the Church had conscience for godliness, desire for integrity, respect for life, value for peace, and love for humanity.

The Failed Church

Since the introduction of ‘Pentecostalism’ into the orthodox Christianity in the early eighties, Nigeria has witnessed the outward existence and the visible activities of the failed Church. “Failed”, because, unlike the early church, she lacks the power to impact the society and restore the world back to its original state of godliness. In the recent years, especially with the present economic crisis, clever individuals have discovered that running a church or ministry could be a lucrative business. As a result church denominations proliferate like mushrooms. Most of them preach prosperity gospel and ‘feel-good’ message just to retain their members. Their main interest is no longer to improve the society, and present the world reputable at Christ’s Parousia, but to acquire wealth, possess private Jets, travel abroad at random, and use the name of the church as a cover-up for their criminal activities. Every day we hear stories of rape and other nasty behaviors by the so-called church leaders. On this Kanu (2016:52-53) says,

Unlike the early church, the present church has compromised and in some cases abandoned the faith, teachings and mission once delivered to the saints...

The church has become a big business and a source of affluence... church Leadership is no longer by calling but by choice induced by the world’s economic condition... the church has dropped her standards, and picked up the standards of the world: the things the world pursues are the things the church and her leaders are pursuing.

This is totally against Jesus' injunction in Mt.5:13 & 16. The present church has failed to show the light because she has quenched the light within her. As far as this synod is concerned the church is like the blind leading the blind and they both will fall into the pit. Of course, when the light fails to shine, darkness takes over. This is the situation we have find ourselves into, in spite of the number of churches, and number of Christians in Nigeria. Iwuagwu (1998:114) echoes the same thing when he says

...The moral situation of our nation has not improved in spite of the intensive religious business in our country. Nigeria is one of the most religious countries of the world. One would expect that the Nigerian nation would have a good record of moral integrity. Instead, there is a serious resurgence of the old fears. The criminal position of our society makes it vulnerable. This is religion without righteousness.

For instance, this part of the nation has been governed for more than 16years by 'Christians' who are members of our churches. Yet, this region is the worst under-developed area of the country. It is not a fault of the political parties; it is a failure for the church. For many years, this part of the country has been known for intensive examination malpractices. Yet, the schools involved are owned by church leaders and members of our churches. Buying items like medicine is a big risk because we have more fakes than originals in the markets. Yet, almost all the traders are Christians, and they organize market prayers fortnightly. This is not a problem caused by Herdsmen. It is a failure for the church.

Conclusion

From all we have so far said, it is vividly clear that the present church has failed in her responsibility of restoring the world to its lost state of godliness. She has lost the power of positive influence on the society. She has lost bearing of the Messaic Manifesto. She has lost the mission in the great commission. Like medicines, soaps and sanitizers whose efficacy is ascertained in the restoration of the object, it is employed to restore, the church's efficacy is impotent.

Therefore, to restore the potency of the efficacy of the church's supremacy, she must go back to the basis, the Great Commission- 'teaching them to obey all the things I have commanded you'. This she must do not by mere preaching but by her practice of righteousness. It is only at this point that her light will shine before the world. According to the epistle to Diognetus in A.D 200, "*what the soul is to the body is what the church is to the world*". Since the soul controls the body, so should the Church control the world. With these few discoveries, I stand to propose the motion that;

- a. *The incessant growth of ungodliness in Nigeria in particular and the world at large is as a result of the church's failure to conform herself into the image of Christ who alone can through her bring about the needed restoration.*
- b. *That God will continue to hold the church and her leadership responsible for the ungodliness in the world till she lives up to her responsibility. And, so the synod calls on Christians and church leaders in Nigeria and across the world to diligently desire to conform to the image of Christ, move from just being nominal members and denominations of the church to becoming embodiments of the characters and virtues of Christ who is the Lord of the church"*

SO I MOVE.

Ven. Precious Okereke

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