

9TH GENERAL SYNOD
THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA, ANGLICAN COMMUNION
TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 16- 20, 2008
PRIMATE'S OPENING ADDRESS

All the people of God here assembled: Greetings in the peerless Name of our only LORD and Saviour, Jesus, the Christ. His peace and joy fill your heart, now and always. Amen

What a great delight and special privilege to be able to welcome you all to the 9th General Synod of our Church. We met like this, three years ago at the Cathedral Church of All Saints, Onitsha where we were ably hosted by the diocese on the Niger. I rejoice in our fellowship. I look forward to a fulfilling and God inspired deliberations and decisions so that God is glorified and his people are truly blessed.

At the last General Synod, ninety-three Dioceses from different parts of the country were represented. Since then, this church has grown both within and beyond the shores of Nigeria. To the glory of God, we have established a non-geographic diocese for the nomadic peoples of this country. Missionary dioceses are springing up in many of the rural areas of the country. We have also established another non-geographic diocese in North America called Convocation of Anglicans in North America, CANA.

We elected and sent a missionary bishop on a three-year special mission assignment in the Church of the Province of Congo. He is due back in Nigeria by the end of the year.

In all there are today in this Province one hundred and forty Dioceses served by one hundred and forty-Six Bishops. Within this short space of time the new dioceses have done what is not financially quantifiable by planting over 400 new congregations. What a geometrical growth in the Church, you might say. But, we are not done yet as we are regularly confronted by the urgent need to open more mission frontiers within the country. I am greatly indebted and ever grateful to our brother Archbishop Joseph Akinfenwa and members of his committee, Bishop Ikechi Nwosu and Bishop Friday Imaehai for their selfless service in travelling, at their own cost, to all nooks and crannies of this country to assess the areas of need.

I wish to place on record the gratitude of us all to the Local Organising Committee of the diocese of Abuja for taking full responsibility for the planning and hosting of this holy assembly. This committee under the dynamic leadership of our indefatigable Yinka Fisher (the one and only Primate's lay chaplain!) worked relentlessly to ensure that you are well received and catered for. Members of the committee went all out to raise the required funds for their assignment. I am grateful to all the individuals, churches and organisations that have helped us financially.

Many of you will have realised that in terms of organisation, structure and quality this Synod is a repeat of the GAFFCON experience.

Transition to eternity

The Lord has called home from among us some who have been very dear to us namely, Bishops Laudamus Ereaku, Samuel Elenwo, W. G. Ekipiripo, the revered mother of Justice Mrs Titi Mabogunje, chairman of the House of Laity, and the chancellor of Kaduna diocese, Justice O. Ejiwunmi. May the soul of the faithful departed, in the mercy of God, rest in peace.

ABUJA, FC T

Abuja metropolis is the political capital city of Nigeria. It lies in the central part of the Abuja federal capital territory (created 1976), approximately 800kilometres by road from Lagos, former capital (until 11 December, 1991). The new capital city is being built and developed on the grass-covered Chukuku Hills. The site was chosen for Nigeria's new capital because of its central location, easy accessibility, salubrious climate, low population density, and the availability of land for future expansion. It is the first planned city to be built in Nigeria. Abuja's geography is defined by [Aso Rock](#), a 400-metre monolith left by water erosion.

The [Presidential Complex](#), [National Assembly](#), [Supreme Court](#) and much of the city lie to the south of the famous Aso rock.

"Aso" means "victorious" in the language of the original settlers but now displaced people of the land. A huge historic landmark adorning the central part of the city is of course the National Christian Centre. This edifice is of great significance to us. As you all know, it was within the first twenty one months of our tenure as National President of Christian Association of Nigeria that we took steps that resulted in the speedy completion and dedication of the magnificent house of prayer. Other important landmarks include the [National Mosque](#), the Central Bank. Abuja is well known for being the best purpose built city in Africa as well as being one of the most expensive city to live in. Satellite towns are being developed in places like Bwari, Karu, Gwagwalada, Abaji and Kuje for the locals as well as new settlers.

Dignitaries

In the Name of the Lord I respectfully and very warmly welcome all our fathers, the retired Bishops and Archbishops of this Church. We thank God for granting you a peaceful retirement and robust health. We appreciate you for your constant love, support and prayer for the Church. We pray that whatever remains of your time shall be joyous and effervescent; your hoary head will remain a crown of glory.

We want to recognize the presence of our ecumenical partners and special invitees to this opening ceremony, you are warmly welcome.

We pray the LORD to continually strengthen our bond of love in Jesus the Christ our LORD.

We are very happy and proud to have the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan with us today. We thank God that you are a man of faith and prayer. This Church appreciates you and assures you of our prayers for you and the government at all times.

Also, we thank the Executive Governor of Anambra State, Mr. Peter Obi, an embodiment of humility and a shining star of democracy. The governor will be speaking to us on the all- important subject of how the Church could combat indiscipline and corruption in Nigeria. The LORD our God will bless you and make you an effective channel of blessing to this nation and to this generation in particular.

We welcome all our friends, members of diplomatic corps, the Head of service of the Federation our own Amal Pepple, political office holders including ministers, and all government functionaries. We appreciate your esteemed presence in this fellowship of God's people. We pray God to fill you with the power of the Holy Spirit to enable you do his divine purpose in your various areas of calling.

Have you noticed that there are delegates at this Synod who have travelled all the way from the United States? The Lord will enrich our fellowship in the gospel of our salvation.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, we welcome you. We are glad to see you and thank you for your willingness to offer a wide coverage of this event. And to all the children of God who are working behind the scene for the success of this General Synod, the staff and the volunteers, God will bless you abundantly.

Anglican National Award for Integrity and Excellence

Synod is reminded that in June 2006, against the background of our effort in combating the menace of indiscipline and corruption, we convened a national conference on "Welfare of the Nigerian Nation: the role of the Anglican Communion in Nation Building". In it, we had two related simple objectives in mind, namely:

- 1. To focus on our Christian Heritage, with a view to re-establishing our bearing from the solid foundation laid by our forebears and built on the ethos of morality, evidenced by hard work, dedication, merit, patriotism, discipline, orderly growth and development.*
- 2. To challenge the leadership of our generation to ask Itself, what it is contributing for the building of modern society, and what legacy it seeks to leave for future generations.*

As a logical corollary to this conference, we decided to initiate and institute an Award for Integrity and Excellence.

We believe that the war against corruption and bad governance will get nowhere, until all Nigerians particularly Christians in government exhibit a sense of personal commitment to the eradication of these vices by living exemplary life of Integrity and Excellence. It was incumbent on us to identify at least a few of our people who may have excelled in this and showcase them.

To make a selection, we set up a high powered national committee under the distinguished chairmanship of Chief Ufot Ekaette, immediate past Secretary to the Federal Government. We all were very proud of the painstaking and marvellous

job of the committee in nominating seven out of over one hundred names they received.

On July 12, 2008 we gathered at the Cathedral Church of the Advent here in Abuja to celebrate the seven eminent Anglicans and decorated them with the first Anglican National Award for Integrity and Excellence. The Committee's report is in your folders.

The war goes on

In addition to rewarding excellence and integrity, we have engaged the professional services of some of the best Nollywood stars led by Mr John Okafor to help us produce a film on the same subject. In it we will dramatise the stories of Achan, Elisha's chaplain, Gehazi, Ananias and Saphira and of course of Zachaeus. The aim is to demonstrate to all our people the grave consequences of corrupt practices in the hope that somehow the lessons conveyed will engender transformation.

It is hoped that the film will be available to us by the end of the year. Look out for it.

At the government level, the nation still has a long way to go in its war against corruption. From all indications, it seems to me government is merely chasing shadows as it has not yet demonstrated the necessary political will and the moral courage to grab the bull by the horn. What we have seen so far is at best mere political rhetoric. On the issue of corruption, we bark but unable to bite. All those who should be languishing in jail are going about freely, making political noise, calling the shots and receiving traditional chieftaincy titles and university honorary doctorate degrees. Some try to find relevance in the Church. This evil must stop, because among other things it has a profound negative impact on hard working honest people.

Further, it is time we alert our government that in our context, the cost of governance is outrageously disproportionate to the national resources and our level of development. At a time when over 70% of our people live below the poverty line, and the so-called poverty alleviation programmes have become more of poverty elevation scheme in its implementation, politics has become sadly financially so attractive that Nigerians would do anything to get 'elected'. Who does not know that in getting to office their first preoccupation is how to recoup their investment with huge profit? They can never be free agents to serve the fatherland with patriotic zeal. Little wonder the noise making national assembly has become more of a Talk Shop Company Nig. plc.

The government must convince itself as well as demonstrate to all and sundry that it is serious in its resolve to rid itself and every aspect of our national life of the evil of indiscipline and corruption. In addition to whatever action plan the government may be putting in place, we urge that these points below be given prompt attention for immediate implementation.

- 1. Down size and trim the government. There are presently, too many people prowling government house and offices with absolutely nothing tangible to do.*

2. *Every year, before a new budget for the coming year is presented for the approval of the National Assembly, it is incumbent on the government to give Nigerians details of the performance of the current budget and show indisputable evidence of what the budget has accomplished. In this regard we ought to put in place a National Budget Performance Monitoring Commission made up of men and women of integrity who have no price tags on their foreheads. Such a Commission is to make a monthly broadcast of its findings to the Nation.*
3. *National Assembly must insist that certified audit report of accounts of the previous year is a pre-requisite for the consideration of a new budget.*
4. *Government must ensure that there are no sacred cows. To this end, we must have a well resourced judiciary with incorruptible judges, courageous, men of integrity and honour to preside over cases that relate to corrupt practices.*
5. *For effective enforcement of all legal provisions in our law books, touching on this cankerworm, Nigeria most urgently needs a well funded, adequately equipped, properly motivated and legally empowered police force that will discharge its duties for the sake of fatherland without counting the cost.*
6. *Reports of all investigated cases that have been swept under the carpet over the years must be brought to light and culprits dealt with according law. All inconclusive probes must be concluded with despatch and disposed.*
7. *We insist that it is made legally mandatory that prior to any person taking office whether in the private or public sector, the person must make a public declaration of his assets AND upon leaving office repeat the exercise.*

The Threat of Food Scarcity

It is scandalous for Nigeria to be talking about food scarcity. What has God not given us in abundance? We have plenty of uncultivated land with rich soil. We are blessed with all year round favourable weather conditions. We have millions of able bodied young people who can farm. Income from sale of crude oil has tripled in the last five years. So we have the money to fund productive agriculture.

But, because it is more convenient for our political leaders to make easy money through spurious import bills, and so rather than invest and encourage local food production, they put our money on importation of food. Young and able bodied people who should be in the farms are daily loitering corridors of power for cheap money. Women of low virtue who have no business in the Ministries get contract papers which they sell to highest bidders for the kind of money for which they have never laboured.

Has it ever occurred to our leaders, that the entire food items we import are grown and produced by human beings like us who till the ground under unfavourable conditions? Good LORD spare us from thy wrath.

General Synod Theme

As part of my retirement plans, I chose the theme for this General Synod designed to be my last with you as Primate so that I could share with you something of my personal testimony touching on the truth and validity of the sacred words of prophet Isaiah:

*“They that wait upon the LORD will renew their strength
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not
Grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” Isaiah 40.31*

I have asked Canon Dapo Asaju, a professor of theology at the Lagos State University to take us through the theological and exegetical analysis of the text in the course of our bible study. The provinces of the Niger, Bendel and Lagos will share their insight with us when they proclaim the word during our Communion services in the next three days.

Let me observe that the message in our text was directed to Judah who had been banished to captivity in Babylon in recompense for their sin of idolatry, apostasy, and rejection of YHWH, their creator and redeemer.

These uprooted, agonising and hopeless people in their pain looked forward in vain to a ‘new exodus’ when YHWH would restore them to the Promised Land. Having lived in foreign pagan land for about 70 years and suffered so much in the hands of their captors they complained that YHWH had lost interest in them and had no regard for their cause, Isaiah 40.27.

In truth, synagogues had replaced the temple; mount Zion was not in sight-indeed for them everything had changed. Such was the situation when they heard the soothing words of the prophet which reassured them of God’s faithfulness; but that they on their part must put not only their whole trust and confidence in YHWH, they must depend and wait on him for salvation and renewed strength. The prophet spoke tenderly in the name of the LORD to the suffering people, assuring them that their time of pain was over; they had received enough punishment for all their sins against the holy one of Israel, it was time to return to their own land. Isaiah 40:1-4.

Clearly, the text is the prophet’s answer to the predicament of faith. He reassures that everyone who waits for God shall have a radical transformation of his circumstances. Imagine this:

- ✓ A renewed strength
- ✓ Mounting up swiftly like eagles
- ✓ Running and not weary
- ✓ Walking and not faint.

And that’s all they needed for their return journey home. True to his word, in due course, YHWH led them by his mighty hand back to the land of Judah. For full account of this second exodus, please read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Hymn writer, William Copper, 1774 sums it all up in CH 484.

3. *Ye fearful saints fresh courage take
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessing on your heads*

4. *Judge not the LORD by feeble sense
But trust him for his grace
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face*

5. *His purposes will ripen fast
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste
But sweet shall be the flower.*

This is the LORD's doing and is marvellous in our eyes. I know that in our churches and dioceses there are stories and testimonies of what the LORD our God has done and is still doing in the life of his people who 'wait' for him. Changed situations, hope in place of hopelessness, light banishing works of darkness; renewed strength, laughter and joy replacing weariness as dreams of great things come true. Work Group 6 will produce for us a compendium of testimonies of what the LORD is doing in the life of our church.

But permit me to highlight two of my own here. Many of you probably know some of the painful stories of the struggles of the early years of my life.

My first testimony is that, there is absolutely nothing in me or my parents that qualified me for the high office of a priest in the Church of God, not to talk of Bishop, Archbishop and Primate. How God in his divine providence called me 40 years ago to be an evangelist and ever before I knew what it means to "wait" on him led me step by step to this enviable position in his Church remains to me a mystery. Oh, how appropriate the abiding hymn of Rev Collins, 1854

*Jesu, what didst thou find in me,
That thou hast dealt so lovingly?
How great the joy that Thou has brought,
So far exceeding hope or thought!
Jesu, my Lord, I thee adore;
O make me love Thee more and more.*

My second testimony is that as of the night of that memorable Tuesday, February 22, 2000, when I was elected Primate, I had a few but serious medical conditions. Anyone who knew me then was aware that I had a crippling lower back problem for which I had consulted doctors in Israel, United States and Britain and of course here at home-without getting much help. I had severe joint pains. I was also suffering from what the doctors called pectoral angina, debilitating ulcer and rib tip syndrome.

When all else had failed, I learned to 'wait' on the LORD and called upon his holy Name.

In the process, I threw away my pop guns! Brethren, the LORD has been faithful in keeping his word. He graciously and miraculously renewed and is still renewing my health and strength. How true the words of our only Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ to his disciples that certain conditions and problematic situations in life could not be resolved except by prayer and fasting-which is another way of describing "waiting" and calling upon the Name of the LORD. To his eternal honour and glory, my back ache became a thing of the past. I no longer have to carry a pillow with me to meetings to support my back! Today, I am much stronger and I enjoy a much better and robust health. Praise ye the LORD!

Global Anglican Future Conference, GAFCON

GAFCON was called like I said in my welcome address in Jerusalem 'as a rescue mission because whichever way you look at it, the Communion has been in deep trouble. This is not only because of the actions of The Episcopal Church, USA TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada but also because the hitherto honoured Instruments of Communion, in recent years have, by design become instruments of disunity, putting the Communion in an unprecedented brokenness and avoidable turmoil'.

As we could not in conscience attend Lambeth 2008, because,

- Against all entreaties and godly counsel, TEC and the Anglican Church, Canada took actions that literally tore the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level.*
- Consequently, we have been in a state of broken sacramental communion with these Churches since November, 2003 and all calls on them to repent so as to be reconciled have been arrogantly and defiantly ignored. Thus, the platform for fellowship by the bishops of the Communion has been shattered.*
- A bishop, duly elected, confirmed and consecrated in the Church of Nigeria and in good standing was not invited. It was resolved that not to invite one of our bishops is not to invite the rest of us as no one of us made himself a bishop by himself. Undoubtedly, Lambeth's insensitivity in this action was not only one of those manifestations of divide and conquer schemes, it was clearly an assault on the sovereignty of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion.*

But that's not all. We called Gafcon because we refused to 'succumb to the turmoil in our Communion and simply watch helplessly. We have found ourselves in a world in which Anglican leaders hold on to a form of religion but consistently deny its power. We have a situation in which some members of the Anglican family think they are so superior to all others that they are above the law, they can do whatever they please with impunity. As a Communion we have been unable to exercise discipline'.

We genuinely believe that 'together as lay leaders, clergy and bishops of our Church we can banish the errors plaguing our beloved Communion-for we will not abdicate our God-given responsibility and simply acquiesce to destructive modern cultural and political dictates. Brothers and sisters, we made it abundantly

clear that 'we know that in spite of the fractures in our Communion, as orthodox Anglicans, we have a future and so we were in the holy land to inaugurate and determine the roadmap to that future.

We emphasised that 'be it by birth or by conversion the men and women in GAFCON which the entire Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion is a part, are people who have grown to be Anglican Christians by conviction, upholding the tenets of Anglican biblical orthodoxy. We have no other place to go nor is it our intention to start another church. Anglicans we are, Anglicans we'll remain until the LORD shall return in glory to judge each one according to his deeds.'

Gafcon has been held with a world-wide acclaimed resounding success and with no financial deficit. I call on this holy assembly to express gratitude to all those who made generous donations to help us fund Gafcon. Lambeth Conference too was held. About 263 bishops from around the world including at least three from the Church of England and representing over 45% of the Anglican world chose not to attend. Unlike Gafcon, it ended in huge financial deficit, and there were no clear unanimous declaration or statement.

Some of the Bishops who were at Lambeth spent the period discussing rather leisurely, the issues that have led the 75 million-strong Anglican Communion to the brink of total collapse, including sexuality and female bishops.

Dr Williams told his audience his hope and prayer "is not that after two weeks we will find a solution to all our problems but we shall in some sense find the trust in God and one another that will give us the energy to change in the way God wants us to change." Further he described the church as a "wounded body" and went on: "It's a great grief that many of our brothers and sisters in the Communion have not felt able to be with us for these weeks, a grief because we need their voice and they need ours in learning Christ together. I respect and accept the decisions that have been made, but together we need in prayer to acknowledge... that we still have to mend relations that have been hurt."

The sincerity or otherwise of those words will manifest in due course. In fairness to +Cantuar, he cautiously expressed a guarded optimism when he said "I am not looking to one great thunderclap of breakage. There will be fractures — there are fractures already, and some of them will get more difficult..." Work Group 4 will study all the reports and advise Synod on its findings.

In and around our Church:

In our attempt as a Church to stand for the truth of the Scripture and to counter any form of false doctrine that may want to rear its ugly head in the Anglican Church and the Christendom in general we committed ourselves to continue to pursue our mapped out strategy in mission and evangelism both at home and abroad.

The collaboration between our American allies and the Church of Nigeria's Mission to America (CANAM) in spite of a few teething problems, is waxing stronger. To the

glory of God, CANA has for the second time won the lawsuit over properties filed against it by The Episcopal Church.

Endowment Fund

I will continue to appreciate those that have bought into our vision of making the Church of Nigeria a viable and financially self sustaining Church. It pleased the LORD our God to raise people in our Church to make generous and adequate contributions for the Gafcon pilgrimage. So, as announced at the Standing Committee meeting, Nnewi, the Treasurer has now credited the endowment fund accounts of the 42 dioceses with the twenty seven million, two hundred and forty nine thousand Naira the sum total they contributed towards GAFCON.

We are having some difficulties with the Endowment Fund. As you know our budget was predicated on the returns from our investments. But now, there is a general lull in the financial market. What is accruing to us is far below expected targets. To make matters worse, CSS Bookshop has refused to pay back the two hundred million Naira it borrowed from the Fund over two year ago.

On your behalf we gave them the loan in good faith. Now they make us regret our action.

Last night your Board of Trustees (BOT) met with the management of the CSS bookshop on how to recover the loan. I call on Group 3 to examine the problem critically and show us the way forward. We need that money, now.

We have another major difficulty with our projections. Our interest in the realty investment suffered a setback with the latest government policy on the revision of the Master plan for Abuja. The current value of the plot allotted to us in the Central Business District of Abuja skyrocketed from N50 million to N560million. For us to retain our ownership of the 8000m2 plot and to forge ahead with our initial plan for its development on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis, we urgently need about half a billion Naira to pay the difference.

At its meeting on July 12, 2008 on this matter, the Board of the Trustees (BOT) decided that the money should be generated from within. Appeal has gone out to all Dioceses for considerable financial contributions by the start of this General Synod. We thank the premier diocese, Lagos, for its prompt response with five million naira.

We continue to believe that this project is a must for us. I look forward for brilliant ideas and actionable proposals from Group 3 that will consider this matter on behalf of Synod.

Theological Colleges/Crowther Language School

In fulfilment of our promise when the endowment fund was established, we now fund the seminaries directly from proceeds derived from the Endowment Fund. In the last two sessions we have been able to provide over forty million Naira as grants distributed among these institutions. This has had palliative effect on the management of our Colleges. Staff are now paid as at when due and essential amenities are provided to make the college environment conducive for learning.

Older members of Synod will probably recollect that for more than a decade we have been on the matter of starting a Language School for our clergy. The plan is

for all postulants in their third year in our seminaries to attend a one year intensive training to acquire two additional Nigerian languages and move back to their original schools to complete their normal pastoral and theological formation in preparation for ordination. In practice, once the school becomes operational, postulants will no longer spend 3 years but 4 to graduate. Our hope is that the LORD will use the Language School to break down the ethnic and tribal barriers that have militated against genuine integration and brotherhood in our Church. It ought to be regarded as a positive tool for national unity and development.

With the arrangements put in place so far, it is hoped the Crowther School of Languages will formally open before the end of this year.

IBRU Centre, Agbarha-Otor

Since the legal transfer of this centre to our Church, we have worked hard to keep it impeccable. We have made improvements on its facilities. Presently, we are building additional block of 64 rooms. On completion, we would have built one hundred and twenty four rooms at the Centre. We are grateful to our patron, Dr Alex Ibru for his support and full involvement in the life of the retreat centre. Words are inadequate to express our appreciation to Mr Goodie Ibru, Chairman, Ikeja Hotels, PLC owners of Sheraton Hotels and Towers for the hotel's annual provision of fantastic catering services for our bishops when in retreat at the centre.

The Centre is ours. All the Archbishops, the Registrar, the Treasurer and the General Secretary are members of the Board. The Primate chairs the meetings. On behalf of the Management and Board of the Centre I appeal to you to make use of it for your retreats and conferences.

All Clergy Conference

We thank God for the success of the All Anglican Clergy Conference held last week at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. We are grateful to the University and its Vice-Chancellor, our own Ven. Prof Chinedu Nebo. We appreciate the planning Committee of this conference ably led by the Rt. Revd. Ignatius Kattey. We hope to see bounteous harvest in a renewed and warm embrace of our liturgical heritage as our clergy rededicate themselves to the service of God in the best Anglican tradition.

We would love to see a return to regular, meaningful and inspired use of the Book of Common Prayer, the Canticles and the Psalter.

Full Primatial tenure!

Long before I was elected the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of this Church, I had nursed the hope that at the age of 65, I would take a voluntary retirement. Thus, as the canons require, I gave my formal notice of retirement in July to the Dean who invoking the relevant provisions of our Constitution consulted with our House of Bishops (HOB) and decided to ask me to continue in office up to the end of my tenure as primate in March 2010. In humility, I have accepted. Please pray earnestly to God to sustain me through these challenging times.

Nineteen months journey

In the next 19 months as we 'wait' on the LORD and call upon his holy name, we'll need to focus more pragmatically and work a little harder on:

- ❖ *Discipleship: emphasising the need to deepen our faith to enable us stand against error and other schemes of the devil.*
- ❖ *Youth work*
- ❖ *Leadership and Advanced theological training*
- ❖ *Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion Towers-Central Business District, Abuja to be accelerated)*
- ❖ *Church of Nigeria Conference Centre and Secretariat, Gudu District, Abuja.*
- ❖ *A new Primate's house*
- ❖ *GAFCON*
- ❖ *The Global South*

Around the world

Disasters

We extend our condolences to all those who suffered loss of their dear ones in all parts of the world particularly China, where Sichuan earthquake has claimed the lives of over sixty nine thousand people. We sympathise with victims of the floods and volcanoes in the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

The effect of HIV and AIDS on our people is still a matter of grave concern as it is adjudged the deadliest and fastest killer ravaging the African continent. We believe more can still be achieved in the area of educating our people and showing love and care to the infected and the affected.

Religious tolerance-a farce:

The whole question of religious tolerance needs to be redefined for the world. Where Christian population is predominant, Muslim minorities ask for tolerance and get it. With time, as experience has shown in many parts of the world e g North Africa, the Mediterranean and now Europe they begin to assert themselves, demanding equal rights and treatment.

In many instances taking the advantage of demographic disequilibrium they have succeeded in overtaking their former hosts and have established Islamic rule. In point of fact, it has taken another dimension in the UK. For Moslems in Britain, it is no longer a matter of asking to be tolerated or begging for equal treatment. Today, Muslims are given preferential treatment. They build mosques in most prime areas and strategic locations in the city of London. It has been reported that it is likely, Muslims might be allowed to introduce Shari' a in the UK. And if you must know, Islamic banking has already begun in the UK!

But what do Christian minorities in Muslim societies face every day of their life? They may cry and beg for tolerance ad infinitum –all they'll get is persecution and in many instances face the danger of extinction. Our Christian brothers and sisters in Iran, Iraq, and several other Middle East countries and unfortunately in certain villages in some states in the north of Nigeria are regarded as "dhmmis" i.e. people of the pact, of protection; permitted to live. They are subjected to gradual, slice by slice programme of total annihilation or until they choose to migrate to other lands.

The point I am making about so-called religious tolerance is that in general, Muslims have been unable to give to Christian minorities in their domain the sort of freedom

and space they enjoy in Christian societies. Thus, they do not tolerate Christian presence nor is there reciprocity.

Religious tolerance has therefore become a one sided principle that favours one particular religion and inimical to the other. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. It is only if we all embrace the divine injunction: "do unto others, as you want them do unto you" that we can truly and in all sincerity preach peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance.

Western Societies

As a Church we cannot but continue to decry the disturbing level of moral decadence and spiritual degradation eating deep into the soul of western societies. In the United Kingdom, all through Europe and in ever increasing number of States in America, Legislators make laws to upturn the natural order and throw God away from the public domain. Marriage and family life as we know them in the word of God have been jettisoned. People of the same sex are legally permitted to marry. Parents' right to discipline their children is legally denied, the age of discretion that used to be 21 has been lowered 18 and there are efforts at reducing it to 16 if not 14.

As if these are not bad enough, only last week the TELL magazine reported in its 36th edition on page 12 that a 27 year old man was arrested for having sex with a sheep in Dulwich, south east London.

More disturbing is that the first day of the week, Sunday, traditionally set aside for worship and rest is no longer free.

Also, the right to proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus the Christ for the salvation of all is severely curtailed and in the name of multiculturalism fuelled by oil politics and economic consideration and benefits, other religious faiths and culture are promoted over and above Christianity. Hiding under the principle of "political correctness" Satan has misled many to deny the reality of sin and God's final judgement. In sum, the western world is not only losing its Judaeo-Christian heritage from which it received its civilisation; it is fast becoming anti Christ and anti Church.

We call on the remnant of the people of the biblical faith to wake up, be courageous, stand in the gap, proclaim the word faithfully and uncompromisingly in season and out season and reclaim these nations for Christ before it is too late. The Parousia may well be at hand.

United States

We salute those who emerged as presidential candidates of both the Republican and Democratic Parties. It was a rigorous, time and energy sapping exercise. But it was participatory as all stakeholders were openly involved in all parts of the vast country. As we wish them well in their electioneering we have our fears and reservations about the dangerous trends we see in American politics.

Ordinarily, it should be our joy that an African American is popularly nominated for the first time in American political history to slug it out with other contenders and going by popular forecasts, he is likely to be heading for the White House.

We should however be concerned that this is a politician considered to be a far leftwing liberal for whom all that counts is victory at the polls. He sees abortion as normal and a matter of right for those who do it. So life is not sacrosanct and man can terminate it at will. By the same token homosexuality is okay and so under him, the world is likely to see more liberal and widespread acceptance of same sex marriages.

We urge Senator Obama to prayerfully reconsider some of his ultra liberal dispositions not only for the sake of "God's own Country" but in the interest of the world. His endorsement of what the scriptures and much of the world condemn will definitely deepen in America the religious and spiritual vacuum which ungodly influences will of course seek to fill by whatever means. And that will have grave consequences for him and his country. As you know, whenever America sneezes, the rest of the world catches cold. In matters of religion, we plead; do not take today's world for granted. A stitch in time saves nine.

*"They that wait upon the LORD will renew their strength
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not
Grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" Isaiah 40.31*

People of God at the 9th General Synod of our Church, learn to wait on the LORD and experience a radical transformation of your circumstances. Pray for the President of the Federal Republic, pray for Nigeria and its people. A team of chaplains, for this Synod, led by Archbishop Edmund Akanya is available to help you.

And now to the King eternal, Immortal invincible, the only wise God, be all honour, glory, dominion, power and majesty, now and ever more.

+Peter Abuja