

## **STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC CONGRESS OF ANGLICANS**



Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Anglican Family, the Global South, the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) movement, and all the faithful seeking a conciliar Church:

The International Catholic Congress of Anglicans, held July 13-17, 2015, at St. Andrew's parish of the Diocese of Fort Worth, Texas, of the Anglican Church in North America, gathered to reaffirm a catholic and conciliar doctrine of the Church. The Great Commission of our Lord directs the Church to make faithful disciples, calling them out of the nations of the world to be holy to the Lord. This statement seeks to sketch out the way forward in fulfilling our Lord's call to make faithful disciples in the context of a properly conciliar church.

### **SALVATION, CRISIS, AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, identifies these disciples corporately as "the called One." The Gospel of our Lord therefore identifies this one holy people, the Church, as integral to salvation for all, so that the Church Fathers and the Reformers of the 16th century, echo the great African Bishop, Saint Cyprian, who said: "outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation," and, "no one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as mother." God calls out a people, rescuing them from sin and death, assuring them that they will participate in Christ's reign, the Kingdom of God. Indeed, it is impossible to know the Lord, who calls out of darkness and into His marvelous light, without being joined to His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Through preaching, the sacraments, catechesis, and spiritual formation, worshiping in Spirit and in truth, the Church is able to make disciples by being faithful to the Apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread, the prayers, and the fellowship.

As the body has no life apart from the head, so the Church has no life apart from Christ, whose Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life. However, churches and the culture in the West are in crisis. Secularism pervades both. In many places, Islam seeks to replace the Church and radical Islam persecutes her. Unprincipled egalitarianism eviscerates language, liturgy, life, faith, and orders of a divided Christendom. A culture of death is evident in abortion and euthanasia, and a tragic and unnecessary sexual confusion shapes the paradigms of young and old. What does the Church say? Where does she stand, and with whom? A deficient and aberrant ecclesiology is not simply a result of the present crisis in Church and culture, but is rather a primary cause for the current crisis, and deserves the attention of all catholic Christians.

### **A HOLY SYNOD AND A CONCILIAR CHURCH**

For the Church (the *ekklesia*) to act, she must know who she is: what is she called out to be? The Church is called into synodality—to come together, to worship, to live in communion with the Holy Trinity, and to mirror the life of the Holy Trinity. This implies the conciliarity of the whole people of God, responsive to the Blessed Trinity, and participating in God's "heavenly synod" as the Church Catholic gathered around God's authoritative Holy Scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition. In this, she is to be the Church on earth as she is in heaven. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the First

Ecumenical Council (A.D. 325). The Bishops encircle the emperor's throne with the copy of God's Holy Word on it, seeking the mind of Christ, searching the Scriptures daily by the power of the Holy Spirit. This perfectly expresses both the authority of the Word of God written and the authority of the Church.

As the "called out ones," the Church consists of parts and individuals, made into a whole. This is the meaning of the Greek word "catholic" (kata holon "according to the whole"). It speaks of wholeness and integrity. The people of God are to live, be, and function as the whole Church Catholic of all ages in true worship, living out the Gospel in apostolic doctrine and communion.

Continuity with the whole Church of heaven and earth for all ages (by the expression of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ in worship, witness, belief, and behavior) marks and identifies this conciliar life in synodality. For Anglicans, this continuity is expressed in the common confession of the Catholic Creeds and Ecumenical Councils at which they were formed and clarified.

St. Vincent of Lérins describes this in the true, Christ-centered, biblical, confessing, and conciliar sense when he says that the Church upholds "what has been believed by all, everywhere, and at all times." This is the essence of kata holon, "according to the whole." When the Church is healthy she is able to come together in the Great Tradition of Eucharistic-centered worship around God's heavenly throne that touches earth. As the Church is at holy rest in God's presence in worship, it becomes a holy people following the unchangeable teachings of Scripture as understood by the Church of all ages and as bearing on the urgent issues facing the world today. Worship as communion with the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of all ages then erupts into the world with one voice, bearing witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ's glorious Gospel.

However, when the Church drifts from historic faith, order, and morals, the opposite is true. Indeed, is this not what has happened in the Anglican Communion? There is an inability even to

gather the historic Lambeth Conference due to this brokenness. Sinfulness has impeded the ability to convene in Holy Synod. The time has come for faithful Anglicans to reclaim the apostolic and Scriptural catholicity, conciliarity, and will, and to come together as a globally obedient witness in Holy Synod, where bishops, clergy, religious and laity can meet together to consult and decide important matters, with each exercising the role proper to them.

In a Conciliar Church, bishops hold a place of primacy as servants of the servants of God in succession from the Apostles, who were consecrated by Christ Himself to lead the Church into the Truth of the Holy Scriptures by the power of the Holy Spirit. "Where the bishop is, there is the Church," and "wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be" (Saint Ignatius). At the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) the Apostles, in consultation with the presbyters and through prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit, resolve a great doctrinal and practical problem through synodal action. The whole Church, clergy and laity, decide how the decision is to be communicated to churches and Christians around the world. Thus bishops, clergy, and laity all participate in the Church's synodality, which is effected through the gifts and work of all.

Mutual synodality, however, does not allow the Church "to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another"

(Articles of Religion, XX). The ancient Church Fathers and Councils considered apostolic and biblical order, faith, and morals by definition to be unchangeable. Thus, when the people of God gather in synod, they do so in order to receive, discern and follow “the Faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), in communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Such Councils find the mind of Christ that has been and always will be. The realized goal of conciliarity is that the Church speak in true, orthodox unity to the world with the mind of Christ. As Jesus prayed just before entering the Garden of Gethsemane, this oneness that He has with the Father, and seeks to have with His Church, brings true belief, obedience, mission, and spiritual awakening to the world (John 17).

## **A CATHOLIC CONGRESS FOR AN ANGLICAN COMMUNION**

Thus, the International Catholic Congress of Anglicans met to address and to model a global, realigned, and fully orthodox doctrine of the Church. This Congress is committed to walk in conciliarity with all Christians who embrace the Catholic Faith—and who allow the Faith to embrace them. A conciliar model of the Church is essential to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. The ancient sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, and the faithful in communion with them, along with Anglicans, Lutherans, and various expressions of Protestantism, each have God-given charisms to be given and received by all—uniting them in ultimate synodality for the discipleship of all the nations of the world to Jesus.

Only an Apostolic and conciliar Church can properly allow for such giving and receiving of gifts for the people of God and for the salvation of the world. Indeed, no one part of the Church can stand firm against the world, the flesh and the devil without the other parts. Because of her core ecclesial difficulties, the Church has insufficiently addressed other causes of further demise both within culture and the Church. There are assaults from without such as virile secularism, militant Islamic persecution, sexual confusion, and the redefinition of matrimony from God’s created order upheld by Christ as a lifelong sacramental union between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). From within there are departures from a Biblical, Catholic faith and order, heresy, liturgical chaos, and failure to call for repentance from sin.

These subsidiary crises, allowed to proliferate through ecclesial lapses, have further fragmented Anglicans globally. Some of the faithful have hoped for the best in the church homes of their youth, others have formed the “Continuing Churches,” or have maintained the Faith in particular jurisdictions. Primates, bishops, clergy, and laity in each of these have struggled valiantly to maintain the historic Church, but the fragmentation continued, and distance between the faithful increased.

God has, however, been moving among Anglicans in an extraordinary way; recent years have seen significant realignment emanating, for example, from GAFCON and the Global South. Yet only with a healthy conciliar ecclesiology will there be movement toward one another in true unity. This Congress recognizes that a proper doctrine of the Church is critical, requiring the attention of all faithful Anglicans.

Now therefore, to fulfill the Great Commission—and to realize further ecumenical relationships within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church—true unity must surpass mere federations and coalitions. This International Congress invites all Anglicans throughout the world (a) to a reexamination of the

doctrine of the Church and (b) to a further consideration of areas of continuing ecclesial contention, for instance, the ordination of women, deemed by some to be a first order issue. This is necessary so that there may be a revival of Catholic Faith and Order, and a return to a biblical, credal, and conciliar fidelity. Only through honest discussion, ongoing prayer, and ultimate agreement will faithful Anglicans discern fully what God is doing in the great realignment taking place globally. This International Congress prays also that in God's good providence there will be a truly Ecumenical Council of the whole Church to address contentious issues facing Christians and churches and to strengthen the faith of the Church.