



Lusitanian Church (Portugal)

Diocesan Synod Final Statement

The 97th Synod of the Evangelical Apostolic Catholic Lusitanian Church met in the Cathedral of St. Paul, Lisbon, from May 31st to June 2nd, 2018, under the motto "From baptism to discipleship; the Church in Mission", inspired by the commandment of Jesus to his disciples (Mt 28: 19-20).

The Synod is the most important meeting of the Church and its democratic organization. Clergy members, lay representatives of the parishes of the Church and of the different Diocesan bodies were all present, all with full participation in the process of decision-making and definition of the strategic direction and mission of the Church for the next two years. There were also invited guests, representing the World Council of Churches, the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church, the Conference of Protestant Churches of the Latin Countries of Europe, as well as Portuguese institutions such as the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches and the Portuguese Bible Society. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Metropolitan of the Lusitanian Church, was represented by Bishop Anthony Poggo, and Canon John Kafwanka, Director for the Mission of the Anglican Communion was also present.

The Synod meditated about difficulties and opportunities facing a small and minority Church, but with a unique capacity for influence and action stemming from its more than centennial social insertion and the established ties both within and outside the country, belonging to the Anglican Communion great family.

The theme of the Synod – *“From Baptism to intentional discipleship”* - was deepened by the Diocesan Bishop, Right Reverend Jorge Pina Cabral, who in his address emphasized that the response to the challenges - such as the aging of some communities and the shortage of clergy members for the development of new areas of mission - will have to be found in the opening to prayer and the transforming action of the Holy Spirit, stating that *“... it becomes fundamental that in the concrete of our personal life, the life of our communities, our Churches, of our families and in other contexts, small groups come together to pray, and pray to be transformed and transforming”*.

As priorities for the future, the Diocesan Bishop reinforced in his intervention, the formation in the faith, welcoming children and young people, the opening of the local parishes and their clear signaling to the surrounding communities, the solicitude placed in the Eucharistic celebrations, all actions that supports the *“material bread”* offer in connection with the *“spiritual bread”* and the feed of vocations for the priesthood.

The increasingly global context in which the Churches are called to live out their Mission and the complex set of challenges they require, demands increasingly concrete and assumed intervention

of the faithful in a discipleship that must be intentional and concrete. This was the theme of the communication of one of our guests, The Canon John Kafwanka, co-editor of an important guide on intentional discipleship in the Anglican context. In a vigorous and engaging intervention, Kafwanka recalled the biblical basis of discipleship and the rupture that is often observed between the proclaimed faith and the experience lived by every Christian on a daily basis. In line with the commitment of the Consultative Council to the Decade of Intentional Discipleship (2016-2025), that challenges the whole Anglican Communion in order that each person, each church and community is molded to the image of Jesus, John Kafwanka encouraged everyone at every level to witness a lively and committed faith based on effective and visible differences in the daily lives of families, school or work contexts, and not only in the more "protected" environment of the churches. It is not just about telling others about Jesus, but about living Jesus in every gesture, word and attitude.

Intentional Discipleship also expresses the decision, planning, and provision of means for the Church to assume in its various levels of intervention - vision of mission, structures, liturgy, prayer and praise, selection and formation of ministers and leaders - promoting the transformation of the baptized into disciples and make these true "fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). In other words, as the Lusitanian Bishop put it, the assumption of Intentional Discipleship will determine *"a change of the ecclesial cultural paradigm, which makes us a church that seeks to go and not only to be open and not closed, that seeks to grow and to dare and not only maintain, more inclusive and less reserved, more prophetic and less accommodating, who prepares and equips for mission"*.

In accordance with this vision, the Synod unanimously approved a proposal that the focus on Intentional Discipleship should be a priority for the Church over the next decade, mobilizing its own resources in parishes, departments and all initiatives of mission and formation. Everything so that the Lusitanian Church can be *"a church of disciples and not just of the baptized ... a church that is guided by the Holy Spirit and who welcomes His newness, renewing itself within, as a new vessel capable of receiving the new wine"* (Matthew 9:17).