

The Church and Nation Responsible for Current State The Lord Bishop Charges

Bishop of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, the Rt. Rev. Howard Gregory, says both the church and the nation must accept responsibility for the present moral, social, spiritual and economic tone in the society, and not blame some cruel fate. However, he offers the assurance that, within the providence of God, no individual or nation is written off.

Delivering his Charge at the Opening Service of 145th Synod of the Diocese at the St. James Parish Church in Montego Bay on April 7, Bishop Gregory stated that much of the prevailing ills in the Church and the society had existed for decades. However he said “we often opt for denial and self-deception and only act when external circumstances and forces dictate the course of action we must take.”

The Bishop’s message was based on Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14 in which the prophet assured the Israelites, who were exiled under Babylonian rule for 70 years, that the Lord would restore them to their homeland. He encouraged them to live their lives as they had before and to continue to worship and serve God in whatever location they found themselves.

Focusing on the Synod theme “*Singing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land*,” Bishop Gregory noted that today, pastoral leaders were challenged to discern the Lord’s message in a world in which the groundings that we have known “seem to be constantly shifting and we now live at a place that feels like an exile.” He cited moral decline and depravity in Jamaica; high levels of crime and violence, especially against children; indiscipline; as well as the harsh economic environment; and for the Anglican Church, the declining membership and loss of status, as contributory factors. However, as Jeremiah told the Israelites in exile, the Lord Bishop urged the nation and the Church to acknowledge their mistakes, and to seek forgiveness and renewal.

He said the Visioning Process in which congregations throughout the Diocese were being engaged was a call to be realistic about our situation which resulted from our collective choices and failures; and he urged members to “seize the opportunities of the present historical moment for mission and ministry” in the church and the world. Please click [here](#) for the full text of the Charge.

The Service was attended by Clergy and Lay representatives from Churches across the Diocese, the Governor General, the Chief Justice and Chancellor of the Diocese, civic leaders and members of the Ecumenical Fraternity.