

THE DIOCESE OF THE WINDWARD ISLANDS

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The Rt. Rev'd C. Leopold Friday, B.A., M.A.

38th Triennial Session of the Diocese of the Windward Islands

Bishop's Charge

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I bid you welcome to this Thirty-Eight Session of the Triennial Synod of the Church in the Diocese of the Windward Islands.

We are assembled here in the Holy Trinity Parish, Castries, St. Lucia, for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist to mark the opening of the 38th Triennial Synod of the Church in the Diocese of the Windward Islands.

I invite you to join me in commending the members of the Clergy of this Diocese for their commitment, sacrifice, dedication, devotion, faithfulness, care and love during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Volcanic eruptions in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We give thanks to God for you and your families and your ministry among us.

We give thanks that we are able to assemble here in St. Lucia for this Synod; originally our intention was to have a virtual synod. We commend the Venerable Christian Glasgow, Rector of the Parish of the Holy Trinity, Castries with St. Mary, La Caye and Archdeacon of St. Lucia, other Clergy and the people of the Archdeaconry of St. Lucia for their time, energy and resources expended in preparing for and hosting this synod.

In the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic with the necessary protocols and restrictions, we celebrated the 200th Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral Church of St. George on Sunday 6th September, 2020. The Theme for the celebrations was: 'St. George's Cathedral 200 years: Affirming Our Heritage, Forging New Paths. 1820-2020'. In the meantime, the restoration of the Cathedral continues.

The restoration of the St. George’s Parish Church, Grenada is not complete, however it is in full use. The work continues. You would recall that it was destroyed during the passing of Hurricane Ivan in 2004. The plan was to rededicate it in April, 2020 but this had to be rescheduled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. In the coming months we’ll look at an appropriate time to do so. And we hope that many of you will be able to join us for this celebration.

Holy Name Church at Sandy Bay in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was severely damaged by Hurricane Tomas in 2010. Restoration works begun just before the explosive eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano in April, 2021 which curtailed the work and caused further damage. The work has since recommenced.

Major repairs were done at the St. Philip’s Rectory, Mesopotamia as well and it was blessed in October, 2020

The St. Patrick’s Rectory at Barouallie was severely impacted by the ash from the volcanic eruption, this caused the roof to collapse. The necessary repairs have been done and the rectory was blessed on Sunday 11th September, 2022.

Several of our rectories are in need of major repairs - Christ-the-King, Carriacou, Grenada, La Digue, St. Andrew, Grenada, St. Patrick’s Sauteurs, Grenada. St. Matthew, Biabou, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Throughout the Diocese we have five Parishes that are vacant.

This Synod places on record its thanks to God for the ministry of the Clergy and Lay members of the various Parishes throughout our Diocese who have been and continue to be faithful disciples and servants of God. The saints whose contributions are known to God and God alone or who have been forgotten or gone unnoticed. May God shower his richest blessings on you.

We give thanks to those who assisted us during the explosive eruptions of the La Soufriere Volcano with financial donations or foodstuff, clothing, water and other supplies, and those who called to enquire of our wellbeing and also for your

prayers. We are grateful to those in the Archdeaconries of St. Lucia and Grenada, Dioceses of the Church in the Province of the West Indies, and the wider Anglican Communion, Our Companion Dioceses of St. Alban, England and Calgary, Canada Bishop Alan Smith and Archbishop Greg Kerr-Wilson, The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA, the Most Rev'd Michael Curry, Dioceses and other agencies and organisations of the Episcopal Church, The Anglican Church of Canada through the Primates World Relief and Development Fund. The Archbishop of Canterbury and Agencies of the Anglican Communion. The USPG. Our ecumenical partners, individual and families regionally and internationally. Your assistance went a long way in helping us to provide for those who were mostly affected by the eruptions.

We welcome the following Clergy and Lay delegates who are attending Synod for the first time:

Clergy.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The Rev'd Fr. Justice Tetteh Apo. Fr. Apo is from the Diocese of Accra, Ghana and is here for three years. I take this opportunity to thank the Rev'd Canon Dr. Kortright Davis for supporting and encouraging me to proceed with this venture and to thank the USPG for facilitating the process and sponsoring his travel arrangements. The Rt. Rev'd Dr Daniel Torto, Bishop of the Diocese of Accra, Ghana for agreeing to release Fr. Apo.

Grenada

The Rev'd Keba Cuffy

Laity

St. Vincent and the Grenadines:

Ms. Jennifer Browne, Ms. Madge Providence, Ms. Sharon Ashton, and Ms. La Quinta Penniston

St. Lucia

Ms. Esther Braithwaite, Ms. Kay-Dee Delpesche

Grenada

Mr. Brent Mc Sween, Mr. Jonathan Taylor and Mr. Cedric Mitchell

Reflections -Presenter

I take this opportunity to thank the Venerable Dr. Steve West Emeritus, of the Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago, for accepting my invitation to conduct the Daily Reflections each morning during the Synod. This will be done virtually. We look forward to receiving your reflections.

Observers:

Church of England

The Rev'd Canon Bruce Sharpe, Church of England, Bishop's Commissary

Anglican Alliance and CPWI Lay Member ACC

Mr. Clifton D. Nedd, JP,

Diocesan Youth Director

Mrs. Sherrie-Ann Auld-Mark

Appointments

The Venerable Junior Ballantyne as Archdeacon of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The Rev'd Alison Samuel as priest in charge of the St. Patrick's Parish Church, Barrouallie with St. David, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, All Saints and Mary Magdalene.

The Rev'd Fr. Justice Teteth Apo as priest in charge of the Parish of St. James, Layou with St. Mary, Buccament, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Rev'd Dr. Thomas Mayers as priest in charge of Christ-the-King, Hillsborough with St. Francis, Harvey Vale, Carriacou, Grenada.

The Rev'd Keba Cuffy, Assistant Curate St. George's Parish Church, Church Street, St. George's with St. Alban, St. Peter, St. Luke, and St. Vincent, Grenada.

The Rev'd Khadisha Smart , Assistant Curate, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Castries with St. Mary, La Caye, St. Lucia.

Ms. Kim Parris – Principal, Anglican High School, Tanteen, St. George's Grenada.
Mrs. Inga Prince-Duncan, Principal Bishop's College, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mrs. Marcia Dublin – Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, Diocesan Office.

I take this opportunity to give thanks for the ministry of Mrs Janice Glasgow as Administrative Assistant to the Bishop for over twenty-five years.

Provincial Appointments

The Rt. Rev'd Ernest Flemming, Bishop of the Diocese of the North Eastern Caribbean and Aruba.

The Rt. Rev'd Alfred David, Suffragan Bishop of Kamarang, Diocese of Guyana. He is the first indigenous Bishop of Guyana.

The Rt. Rev'd Garth Minott, Suffragan Bishop of Kingston, Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

Ordinations

Deacon and Priest

The Rev'd Keba Cuffy and the Rev'd Khadisha Smart were ordained Deacon and Priest since the Synod 2019

Seminarians:

Ms. Oneka Morgan

Remembrance

Since the last synod the following persons who were former Synod Representatives have passed:

Honorary Lay Canons Dennis Lambert and Patricia James

Ms. Nina Maloney

Mr. Seon Alexander

Mr. John-Paul Fletcher

Sister Patricia Caruth

Mrs. Cecelia Akers-King – Former Principal of Bishop's College, Kingstown

We extend our deepest sympathy to their relatives. Rest eternal grant unto them O'Lord and let light perpetual shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

I take this opportunity to recognize the dedication, hard work and contribution of principals, teaching and auxiliary staff, students, Parent Teachers Association, The Members of the Governing Body, the Governments, through the Ministries of Education, Business Sector, well-wishers and Past students of the St Andrew

Anglican Secondary School, Bishop's College, Carriacou, Bishop's College, Kingstown, and the Bequia Community High School, of all Anglican Primary Schools.

The last two to three years have been quite challenging for teachers, I invite you to join me in saluting our teachers who stepped up their game in response to the COVID-19 pandemic transitioning from face to face to the virtual platform back into face to face; it has been a lot of different changes. In spite of this, they carried out their task well. Quite often teachers are taken for granted and the profession is not as celebrated as it should be. Let us take this opportunity to appreciate them and give the profession what it truly deserves.

I share with you the experience of eleven Representatives who were scheduled to travel on Inter-Caribbean Airlines from St. Vincent and the Grenadines to St. Lucia last Saturday. They were scheduled to leave St. Vincent and the Grenadines around 10:15am. At one time they were told that the flight was delayed. There was then some uncertainty as to whether the flight was cancelled. Eventually they were told that the flight was scheduled to arrive at a given time and that it will go to St. Lucia before going on to Barbados, but when the flight arrived they were informed that the flight will be going to Barbados and that there wasn't any connecting flight from Barbados to St. Lucia and there was no guarantee that they will be able to rebook them for the Sunday. So, their chances of getting to St. Lucia for the Synod seemed to be impossible. And there was no guarantee that they will be refunded the full fare even though it was no fault of theirs, and it was Inter Caribbean who did not fulfill their part of the agreement. There are others who have shared similar experiences.

The Venerable Junior Ballantyne contacted Mustique Airways on Sunday morning and they agreed to take them to St. Lucia not as a charter, even though it is not part of their regular schedule, but at the normal return fare. We must commend the Venerable Junior Ballantyne for his astute leadership and action and the dedication and commitment of the other ten Representatives who paid their fare or assisted each other in so doing. We commend Mustique Airways for their kind response at such short notice. I am told that one member journeyed to Grenada to catch British

Airways out of Grenada on Saturday evening to St. Lucia. This speaks of how passionate you all are for God and God's Church.

Theme: Called To Serve: Being A Church Of Hope

In 1 Kings 19:; 1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.' ³Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: 'It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.' ⁵Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, 'Get up and eat.' ⁶He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, 'Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.' ⁸He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ¹⁰He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

¹¹ He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; ¹²and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there

came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ¹⁴He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.' ¹⁵Then the LORD said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram.

Called To Serve: "Being A Church Of Hope

In 1Kings 18, Elijah had his dramatic public confrontation with the prophets of Baal. Here he is filled with self-confidence, assurance and composure. In chapter 19 we see Elijah's internal struggle, his fears and doubts, and his private withdrawal into the wilderness. We are informed that God meets Elijah in the wilderness and responds to him and provides for his needs, and redirects him.

In this passage Ahab reports to Jezebel that Elijah killed all her prophets with the sword. Jezebel's response is to send a messenger to Elijah with a death threat that she vows will be fulfilled in one day. Elijah is afraid, and he flees for his life, he goes to Beersheba. 1 Kings 19:3 reminds us that Beersheba is under Judah's control, which means that legally, it is beyond Jezebel's reach. However, Elijah does not stop there, instead he journeys for another day, into the wilderness. Here he feels safe, for he was now in the land outside Jezebel's jurisdiction, outside her rule. He sits under a large desert bush (NRSV and NIV: "broom tree") and asks to die, telling God, "It is too much; now, Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4).

These verses focus on a direct encounter between Elijah and God. What he is going through in his ministry causes him to retreat into self-pity and seeks to escape from his responsibilities.

Elijah complains to God that he has had enough of ministry, and expresses a wish to die. Elijah is angry because he feels he is being left alone, with no other prophet around, and is even persecuted. And so, he comes to Mt. Sinai to confront God "face to face."

It is important to note that Elijah is not released from what lies ahead, but after being provided for, he is sent back to the same hostile environment which he sought to escape. A direct encounter with God does not necessarily result in a change in what God would have us do, nor a change of the environment, or a change of mission/ministry, in spite of how challenging it may be.

So, God redirects Elijah, commanding him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus" (1 Kings 19:15). God will continue to work in Israel after Elijah is gone; God does not depend on Elijah. But Elijah matters to God, as is evident in all the ways throughout the chapter that God provides for and communicates with him.

God points out to Elijah that, contrary to his own thinking, he is not the only faithful member of the community that is left! He is a part of a remnant numbering at least seven thousand (1 Kings 19:18).

In this journey filled with challenges, Elijah is not alone. The promise of God's ongoing presence keeps ringing in his ears. Sustenance is provided to strengthen and encourage him along the way, and he is given a recognition that he is not alone, though it may often seem like it. Others also have this calling and will share the load, even though it seems likely to be a lonely and arduous journey.

This journey may be accompanied by many disappointments and frustrations and the way at times may be rigorous with hardly any moment of comfort. What this passage emphasizes, is that through it all God is present, and through the wilderness experience God will enable us to see the challenge from a different perspective and to approach it with renewed vision and energy. God does not change the circumstances, or the mission or responsibility, rather through the wilderness experience the prophet, the disciple, you and me are transformed, strengthened, equipped to continue the journey and to fulfill the mission to which God has called us.

In addition to this passage from 1Kings 19, there are other wilderness experiences, In the Old Testament, I refer to two of them. There are the stories of Moses and Hagar. Moses and Hagar each entered the wilderness twice. First, they *ran away from* oppressive situations and family conflicts. Moses ran from punishment, after finding himself caught between his Jewish heritage and his royal Egyptian status

gained through his adoption. Hagar, impregnated in place of Sarah, Abraham's wife, had been abused by Sarah, so she ran away into the wilderness. In both cases, Hagar and Moses encountered God, understood God by new names, received a promise, and were told to return to their difficult situations (Gen. 16 and Ex. 2-3). Hagar returned to be a slave, and Moses returned to take his place with the enslaved Israelites, and to free them from Egypt.

In the Gospel after forty days in the wilderness where Jesus was tempted by the devil, Jesus returned to the same world, nothing had changed. Neither did Jesus fall to the temptations to appease the evil one. He remained faithful to God and to His Mission, as he embarked on his ministry in earnest.

Making sacrifice is an important part of what it means to being called to serve and to grow closer to God, however, what God pursues in our journey as disciples is relationship. For Elijah, Moses, and Hagar, what he gives we note that it is at a moment of great distress, when they are at the point of giving up, that God comes to rescue them. We are to love God for who God is, rather than what he gives us; with or without food, with or without comfort, with or without challenges, difficulties and suffering, God is still God, who loves and cares for us. So, in spite of what he gives us, we continue to embark on the mission and ministry to which we have been called.

The challenges faced, the discomfort experienced and the distresses endured during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Volcanic eruptions, Hurricanes and storms, and the rise in the price of commodities, food and fuel, and all the other trials and circumstances of life can be regarded or seen as obstacles, barriers and hindrances which prevent us from fulfilling the responsibilities to which we have been called. For they may distract us or stifle our ability to "hear" God. Having an appropriate understanding of God's way will enable us to continue to develop a clear and intelligible view of ourselves and the world. This, promotes trust, and feelings of security, and intimacy. It is important for us to be aware of the challenges of our society, and the ways that we avoid the wilderness, so that we do not miss such an experience. "As much as we might prefer to avoid it, the wilderness is where God is. The wilderness is where God does some of God's best work." (B. B. Taylor, "Four Stops in the Wilderness," at 9.)

Therefore, let us reflect on the ways in which we may have encountered God during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, other natural disasters and generally through the challenges of life, for as Juliana Weber has said; This is an adaptation:

All suffering, abuse, family conflicts, confusion, and other pains in this life can bring us into a spiritual (if not physical) wilderness where we encounter God. This means that suffering has a purpose, and that a life in which there appears to be nothing but suffering can have the deepest meaning of all. Alleviating or avoiding pain is not wrong, I am not saying that we are to willfully bring suffering and pain to ourselves, neither are we to seek it nor condone it. What I am saying is this, a life free of crises, difficulties and challenges would never allow a decision to be made between God and the things he provides for us. The questions about his trustworthiness, and what we are willing to leave behind in order to follow him, would never occur to someone who has never faced a challenge or difficulty, suffering or pain. Without suffering, there is no freedom to love God entirely, to make a sacrifice for him. It is a crisis like the second entrance into the wilderness, which makes room for what is truly most important for human fulfillment. (Juliana Weber) in Homiletic and Pastoral Review May 31st 2015. Article entitled, The meaning of the Wilderness.

It is as Paul states in Romans 5: 1-5

[1](#) Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

[2](#) through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

[3](#) And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

[4](#) and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

[5](#) and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

At the same time, we are to remember the words of Jeremiah 29:11:

[11](#) For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Through our baptism we have been called by God to participate in God's mission. It is an assignment given to us by God for God's purpose. This is not limited to our ministry in the Church, nor to our workplace and what we do there. Our call is to be committed to the ways and purposes of God, to develop an abiding relationship with God through God's Son, Jesus Christ. It includes our family life, and those with whom we come into contact each day and those we serve.

In John 15:16

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

It is God who has called us to this ministry both lay and ordained, and we have a responsibility to God to be faithful to our calling and to exercise our ministry with devotion. We must not be swayed by the ways of this world, nor by its insidious, covert, clandestine and subtle attractions, praise and commendations. That which causes us to be comfortable and to make many persons including those of high social, economic and political standing inviting us to associate with them, or into their fellowship must not lead us to yield to the temptation to stray from our commitment and faithfulness to God. We have been called to participate in the mission and ministry of God through his son Jesus Christ. Jesus came to save his people from their sins. The Gospel according to John states quite clearly that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whosoever believes in him shall have everlasting life. This is the ministry we are called to participate in. Just as those whom we serve will one day have to give an account to God for their stewardship, so it shall be for you and me, and we are to take this seriously. It is our responsibility to do our utmost to ensure that all those we come into contact with and serve are brought into a right relationship with God and are saved from their sins, including ourselves. Consequently, in all circumstances of our lives,

faithfulness to God is essential. We may be ridiculed, we may lose a friend, companion or colleague, we may no longer get any assistance from one person or another, group or organization or the civil authority. Be that as it may. We serve a true and living God to whom we must be faithful.

Called To Serve: Being A Church Of Hope

God has called us to serve not just a chosen few, nor only those who we associate with and appreciate. No one is to be excluded. God has given us gifts which are to be used not simply for our own benefit and enjoyment but to serve others, wherever there is a need.

Through all the events, experiences and circumstances of our lives God is present revealing his will and his purpose to us. It is right there that we are called to serve. We do not have to look far or seek to create situations to enable us to serve. It is in the common and ordinary, day to day things of life that opportunities are created for us to serve, and to fulfill our calling as disciples of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. Right there we can see how discrimination, injustice and exclusion are entrenched in various groups, organisations, and institutions in our society. It is important to note that these same entities on paper have policies that does not encourage, promote, condone or tolerate these practices. However, these policies are seldomly if at all implemented.

As disciples of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as a church and diocese to be a Church of hope in these circumstances means that we are to bring to the fore habitual and consistent discriminatory practices and advocate for those who are socially excluded and marginalized. God will give us the strength and support to carry this ministry. There will be those who will oppose what we do and have done and we'll face challenges. In the midst of it all may we remain faithful to our calling to serve. For it is in so doing that we will be a Church of hope.

As we embark on this ministry, we must always be aware and conscious of our own failures, frailty, mortality, weaknesses and sins. We tend to despise the Pharisees and other Jewish religious authorities, because of their response to Jesus calling, associating with, advocating for and having table fellowship with tax

collectors and sinners. It is important for us to recognize and acknowledge that the twelve disciples themselves and at times like them we too struggle with the ways and purposes of God, we do not always get it right. Thus, as we reflect on the theme of this synod: "Called To Serve: Being A Church Of Hope: and whatever we are able to do or achieve as we implement it, the emphasis must be on the goodness, compassion, mercy and graciousness of God which is so marvelous and beyond our understanding, our comprehension and give glory to God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is in so doing that we will be true to our theme: **Called To Serve: Being A Church Of Hope.**

As disciples, our purpose in life is to serve God and be faithful to his plan. All that we do is to be motivated by our faith in God thus reflect God's love. It is by using the gifts God has given us to serve others that we glorify God and when we are obedient to God's call and follow his ways and purposes. Serving God involves carrying out spiritual roles, however, it is not restricted to this. We are called to serve in various ways as we respond to human needs. Whether we are in the field of health, sanitation, accounting, science, engineering, writing, music, singing, dancing, cleaning, farming, cooking, drawing, painting, teaching, building, manufacturing, industry and commerce, politics, speaking, sport, communication, information technology and the list goes on, we can and are to serve and honour God. Whether our service is paid or unpaid, we must never restrict work or service to that for which we are paid, for God calls us to serve others through unpaid work as well. Neither should we regard paid work as more valuable than unpaid work, for the things we do voluntarily at times are invaluable, priceless, precious, treasured and indelible.

We are called to acknowledge that every role is important even though society assigns different values to them, let us not see people nor identify them with the value society places on what they do, rather as our brothers and sisters, fellow human beings who are worthy of respect and honour, and see how best we can work together for the building up of the body of Christ, the Church, our nations and the world.

Romans 12:3-8

[3](#) For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

[4](#) For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function,

[5](#) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

[6](#) We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith;

[7](#) ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching;

[8](#) the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

God called Jonah to perform a particular task but Jonah ran away because he was disheartened and in total disagreement with what God had called him to do. We note that the period spent in the wilderness so to speak was used by God to change Jonah's perspective and understanding of the purpose for which he was called. The task was not changed, he came out of the wilderness and proceeded to do what God had called him to do in the first place.

What this teaches us is that no matter what difficulties, challenges, disappointments we face we have the freedom to choose our response to these situations. We can do like Jonah and choose to respond negatively or to react positively. We can choose to ride out the storm or allow it to overcome or overwhelm us. Our reaction whether positive or negative is not caused by the adverse events rather it is due to how we perceive and interpret them. As we reflect on the theme for this synod 'Called To Serve: Being A Church Of Hope', it will be important for us by the grace of God, to train ourselves and others to choose beliefs and thoughts that empower us to deal with challenges, difficulties and disappointments, and to focus on the lessons we can learn from them that will put us in good stead as we journey on. Elijah, Moses, Hagar, Jonah, Peter and Paul experienced challenges and difficulties in their lives with which they

struggled and from which they tried to run away into the wilderness. In the wilderness they encountered God who enabled them to see these events from a new perspective and gave them the grace to return and to fulfil the ministry to which they were called.

Our journey as disciples, as church, may be accompanied by many disappointments and frustrations and the way at times may be rigorous with hardly any moment of comfort. Our hope lies in the good news, in the truth that through it all God is present, and through the wilderness experience God will enable us to see the challenge from a different perspective and to approach it with renewed vision and energy. God does not change the circumstances, or the mission or responsibility, rather, through the wilderness experience we who have been called by God's grace are transformed, strengthened, equipped to continue the journey and to fulfill the mission to which God has called us . Whatever happens God is God.

8 'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. (Revelation 1: 8)

Called To Serve: Being A Church Of Hope.