The Episcopal Charge to the 54th Annual Synod of the Diocese of the Eastern United States

Synod itself

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who by thy Holy Spirit didst preside in the Council of the blessed Apostles, and hast promised, through thy Son Jesus Christ, to be with thy Church to the end of the world; We beseech thee to be with the Council of thy Church here assembled in thy Name and Presence. Save us from all error, ignorance, pride, and prejudice; and of thy great mercy vouchsafe, we beseech thee, so to direct, sanctify, and govern us in our work, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, that the comfortable Gospel of Christ may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed, in all places, to the breaking down the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death; till at length the whole of thy dispersed sheep, being gathered into one fold, shall become partakers of everlasting life; through the merits and death of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Praised be Jesus Christ! It is the highest privilege of my life to stand before you on this day for the first Synod of my ministry amongst you and for you as Diocesan Bishop. As a sign of our Apostolic Succession, this may be my first Synod as your Bishop, but it is the 54th Synod of this Diocese. Our Lord Jesus Christ is doing a wondrous work in our midst. Words fail to express the intimidating awe and reservation I feel standing in this position before you today, and the love and gratitude I have for each and every one of you. These are terribly big shoes to fill. In this moment, I stand where Bishop James George, Bishop Anthony Clavier, and Bishop Walter Grundorf have stood before, all the way back to 1968, before I was born. God bless them all. Like your first bishop over half a century ago, I serve you as a son of Carolina, raised on the farms and the delicate red clay named in honour of Charles the First, Anglicanism's Royal Martyr. Certainly providential.

I love you all – and I go to the Altar of God with all of you on my heart. The Church is ever ancient, ever new. Today marks a new beginning in many ways but also that continuity and contiguity which is a hallmark of Christ's true Mystical Body. It reminds one of the words of Saint Augustine, 'for you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian.' Together we meet here simply as the Church – we are nothing less than the Church of the Apostles, the Fathers, and the Saints. Here gathers the fullness of the Church as instituted by and founded on Our Lord and established in the Apostles and their successors.

Of your Christian charity, please pray earnestly for this Synod and for its ministry and work, as we seek to conduct the administrative business of the Church according to the mind of Christ and His Gospel and to advance the mission, governing, formation, preaching, teaching, and evangelistic outreach of our unique branch of Christ's Body.

The word Synod is taken from the Greek word *sunodos* meaning 'assembly' or 'meeting,' and it is synonymous with the Latin word *concilium*, meaning 'council.' Synod literally means 'to journey with' or 'the way together.' No better description of the annual meeting of the Church's authorised representatives, lay and clergy, could possibly be offered! Synod is not merely a business meeting, an ecclesiastical legislative body, or a social event, although it is

all of these things; it is the Church herself gathered, the Church at worship, in communion, in service and ministry, the Church in action together. Synod powerfully and tangibly demonstrates the unity of the Body of Christ, the catholicity and universality of the Church, what is called in the Russian language *sobornost*, from the root word meaning 'to gather,' wholeness and inner completeness, wherein the many are brought together into free and organic unity by the power of love, a perceptible manifestation of the Holy and Undivided Trinity in Whom there is both unity and diversity in communion of love.

Let us therefore recognise in the Synod of the Church a kind of sanctuary, a holy place and time, in which is revealed anew the Family of God, the Household of Faith, and the journey of the Christian life from earth to heaven, a foretaste and precursor of our future arrival in unity in the heavenly Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God, where we shall live and reign in Christ for ever and ever. Those of us who participate in Synod should sense in it the anticipation of the rest of our Christian lives and of our glorious fulfilment in the King of Glory. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the Mother of us all (Gal 4.26).

We encourage everyone to take a decided interest in the meetings and events of this Synod. Most critically, we invite everyone to enter into the spirit, significance, and purpose of Synod by prayer. Thank you all so very much for your loving support and encouragement during this special time in our corporate life together.

The Little Flock – we are tiny, but feisty and mighty! Get ready for a sermon!

If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

I want this charge today to begin with Jesus, to continue with Jesus, and to end with Jesus. Today we stress our complete and absolute confidence in the project which God has Himself created and is called the Continuing Church. We have the capacity truly to rechristianise this country in the way of Anglo-Catholicism, the American Catholic Church, or the English Catholic expression if you will, the indigenous Church of this land, which is frankly older, more rooted and grounded in our own culture and history, and theologically vastly more committed to the infinite transcendental truths of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful than any other form of Christianity found in America today, and that includes both the Churches of Rome and the East. Anglicanism is Mother Church. We are here because Our Lord has willed us to be here, and to continue that magnificent flavour of Christian orthodoxy called Anglicanism. We are best positioned to reclaim our land and the world for Christ. Our mission, our missiology, is Jesus Christ in our neighbour – to draw all men to love Him, adore Him, serve Him, and glorify Him, and we have been equipped to do precisely this for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Our evangelistic call is to activate and apply what we have been given, for the love of God and the love of our fellow men. We have at our disposal all that is needful.

We undoubtedly do not need to look anywhere else for legitimacy, credibility, recognition, and authenticity. We are the radiant heirs of true patristic worship, doctrine, and life. We are the heirs of the ancient Church, the heirs of the *Ecclesia Anglicana*, the heirs of the Oxford Movement and the Catholic Revival, the heirs of the Church in the English-speaking world and beyond. God has entrusted to us the Apostolic Deposit of Faith, the Faith Once Delivered unto the Saints. To us today can be applied the words of Saint Paul: 'to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.' So take heart little flock.

We have the fullness of the Faith revealed by Christ in the canonical Holy Scriptures, the three great Creeds, the Seven Holy Sacraments, the Apostolic Succession in Holy Orders, the faith-consensus of the first thousand years of Christian history, the Holy and Apostolic Tradition, the mind of the Fathers, and the Seven Ecumenical Councils. For what more could one possibly ask? In our Common Prayer and Common Life is found the Kingdom of God. Let us live it, and share it everywhere we go. This is not a matter of triumphalism, but a matter of sin, conversion, and salvation. We have been graced to offer mankind what is necessary for his eternal salvation and the forgiveness of sins, not through any merit of our own, but by the mercy of God. It is up to us to align ourselves with this gift and faithfully to provide it to the world. Are we doing so? For all of this to be effective, *we* must respond in faith, in hope, in love, and in repentance. We are called to humble ourselves before God and let *Him* work. Our task is to obey and not impede – and let God act.

We possess, by the grace and providence of Almighty God, the Pearl of Great Price: an incomparable liturgy, the original and patristic ecclesiology, a vibrant and personal way of parish life, a deeply engrained soul-empowering ethos, a truly Apostolic collegiality, and a rock-solid biblical metaphysical grasp of reality that can provide a shelter from the coming storms of the decaying culture that surrounds us. And not only this. We have the roots, the backbone, the character, and the theological and pastoral depth to persevere and bring the promises of God to fruition in our own time. We should never sell the Continuing Church short. We can never give up. 'No desertion, no surrender.' We are only getting started. We not merely a movement, we are the Church - in movement.

Anglo-Catholicism in the Continuum is a time-tested, Mother Church approved path to maximal Christian life, practice, and holiness. Unlike much of what sadly passes for Christianity (or better yet, Churchianity) in our current postmodern situation, we must never dilute our Church into some cheap commodity that militates against the splendour of the infinite truth to which we are committed. We have the experience, the theological profundity, and the substance to withstand the coming tests. What defines the Anglican Catholic? Reverence, dignity, graciousness, a deep love for the individual soul, the treasuring of personal relationships, a concern for the salvation and sanctification of the human person. A sense of the transcendent and numinous, an intense awareness of the Incarnation of God the Word made Flesh extended in Scripture and Sacrament, humility before the majesty of God in adoration and worship, a totally theocentric focus on the glory of the Blessed Trinity with a living consciousness of His Kingdom manifested in His Saints and the whole Church in heaven and earth. With these gifts, we can never fail. Again, we must remember we *are* the Church. Let us beg God to use us to His glory.

As I travel the Diocese I see life in our Church as never before – those parishes and missions that are growing swell with young families and children. In fact, most of the churches I visit have witnessed recently a significant increase in the number of younger people, even during the pandemic. The essential ingredient for our future growth and the reason why younger people, especially millennials and generation zed folks, are already attracted to our Church is the remarkable distinctiveness in the Traditional Mass and Sacraments of the Church in the primeval Western Rite, and the formation around that transcendent liturgy, way of worship, and life of a unique and altogether familial community of relationships rooted in biblical doctrinal teaching. Anglicanism simply is Western Orthodoxy, the Western Church in her repristinated instantiation.

We should do what we do best; we do not do megachurch, we do not do low or high church 1950s Episcopalianism, we do not do modern evangelical showmanship, we do not do rock bands, entertainment, and hootenanny, we do not do Calvinism or Lutheranism or any other sixteenth-century innovation, we do not do the neo-charismatic or the gnostic, we do not do antiquarianism, cosplay, or creative anachronism. We offer in our own contemporary context in the real world the Holy Sacrifice of Jesus Christ Himself, the sublimity of the ancient Eucharistic rite of the Western Church according to Apostolic Tradition and the ministration of the Holy Sacraments in their ancient form. In other words, we are Deep Church. Not mere Christianity, but *more* Christianity. The fullness of orthodoxy, right worship and right belief. This is what makes us who we are – and we should treasure it and be eager to spread it abroad. As the Church is at the Altar, so is she in her formation, catechesis, development of meaningful relationships, and the fostering of Christian community. We are called to attention to detail in all of these areas. That meticulousness, attentiveness, and genuine care is our heritage and our gift to the wider Church and the world around us.

The Faithful Remnant

We need to develop a more substantive and robust understanding of ourselves as the faithful remnant. Resist the zeitgeist – we are the faithful remnant – don't be afraid – don't worry first about size, money, numbers, but rather, be concerned about your fidelity and obedience to Christ. *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace (Romans 11.5) And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward (Isaiah 37.31)*

By the mercy of God, we have inherited through no worthiness of our own the plenitude of the Christian Religion. We are now assuredly the orthodox Catholic Church of the West (thank you, Pope Francis). In truth, all kidding aside, we always have been, given our patrimony of the primitive and patristic. We are the Church, katholikon, 'according to the whole,' neither puritan nor protestant nor papal. It is most providential to be where we are, and the Lord has ordained our station from the foundation of the world, to be here, right here, right now – this is our time in the 21st century to *martus*, to martyr, to witness for Our Lord, His Gospel, His Church, His Faith, His Truth. Ours is the Divine Commission of St Matthew 28 – 'go teach all nations, preach the Gospel to every creature' - by now you can tell that I am fully convinced in the centre of my being that we are a central component for the present and future of orthodox Christianity in the Western world. A massive claim for a miniscule Church. But so be it. We remember the parable of the mustard seed!

Let us seek to re-establish the remnant on the parochial and Diocesan levels. In each parish and mission, we should cultivate a remnant, a smaller core group of faithful disciples of Christ who are intentional about prayer, theological formation, communal life, and above all, spiritual direction. In turn the remnant is a leaven that leavens the whole lump, that begins in an influential way to shape the spiritual lives of others who may find themselves more marginal or peripheral in the Church. This is not the Pareto principle 20/80 rule of 20% of the faithful doing 80% of the work! This concept is about having an essential group of unconditionally committed faithful given entirely to the Gospel and living the Catholic Faith in their own lives, who can form around themselves a more vigorous *lex vivendi*, the law of living the Gospel, which in turn converts and intensifies the entire community. If we are not doing this in our Churches, we can begin now. In the coming years, I look forward to sharing more thoughts about this necessary spiritual reality. Remnant theology/praxis can lead to the complete transformation of a Church.

To this end, because we are the faithful remnant dedicated to expanding the Kingdom of God, we are excited to share news today…

First - The Domestic Mission Team

The newly-appointed DEUS Domestic Missions Team has been busy over the past year preparing for our present and future work on behalf of our Diocese. The team has taken time to identify those parishes and missions which may benefit from revitalisation and has also worked to develop a plan for the creation of new mission congregations in DEUS in the coming years. The ideas and programme coming forward are of intense benefit for our common life and outreach. We thank the Reverend Canon Wade Miller, Dean Paul Rivard, and Father Mark Perkins for their ministries and commitment.

Another exciting development, and a part of our Domestic Mission Team's plan, the first local mission effort in my administration, is our effort to bring a renewed focus on ministry to the mission of All Saints' Church, Palatka, Florida. Father Paul Beutell, with the support and encouragement of the Diocesan Standing Committee and our Domestic Missions Team, has assumed his new ministry at All Saints'. Please pray for everyone at All Saints' as this work ensues. The 2023 Lenten Appeal will be for the support of All Saints' Palatka.

Our Digital Media Director

One of the major developments in our Province over the past few months has been the opportunity to call Matthew (Stu) Stuart, a truly gifted and talented information technology professional, to serve full-time as our first APA Digital Media Coordinator and IT Specialist. Stu comes to us with many years of extensive experience in the computer field and has been diligently working since early March to assist us in the upgrading of our Provincial and Diocesan websites, in the creation of a new APA telephone application with instant news, information, and material available at one's fingertips, and the launching of new social media accounts on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

Our Province received a tremendously gracious financial bequest last Christmas Eve which has made this new ministry possible. Moving our internet ministry to the next level of excellence has been and remains a top priority for our jurisdiction. It would be a challenge to attempt to describe all the work and hours that must be invested in the creation of these new avenues of evangelistic outreach and Christian formation, and I am earnestly grateful for Stu's ministry, as I know you shall be as well. The newly upgraded APA and Diocesan website will be unveiled for you here this week. Our new website will feature podcasts, videos, my blog, user-friendly news and materials, and a full array of items by which to learn the Faith and to know more about our branch of Christ's Holy Church.

We also asked Mary Willis Fife to spearhead a branding campaign to update and more historically to ground our symbols and shield. Let us offer our profound thanks to Mary Willis for her creativity, research, imagination, and hard work, which have led to the creation of a new branding product that will withstand the test of time. If you haven't seen the new shield yet, you'll love it. It's beautiful!

In the 21st century, nothing could be more important for bringing the Anglican Province of America into the reach of the world population and our local communities. Our reinvigorated and expanded internet presence will be a major path, if not the key path, to making contact with the public at large. We wish to establish an updated internet ministry that will easily put at anyone's disposal all that is needed to consider and embrace the Christian Revelation as found in Catholic Anglicanism. Please thankfully pray for Stu and Mary Willis in their work and ministry. We shall all be delighted with the advances we are about to behold online.

Presentations at this Synod

During this Synod, we will hear special presentations on some of the major activities underway in our Diocese. There are too many to include in one Synod, so specific developments have been particularly selected in order to highlight them and bring them to your attention: our new APA Branding and Website; a Women's Ministry Forum; the Saint Matthias Church, Dothan, Alabama building; the Saint Patrick's Church, Brevard, North Carolina building; St. Paul's Classical School, Melbourne, Florida; the Ecclesial School Initiative at St. Alban's Cathedral, Oviedo, Florida; All Saints' Church, Mills River, North Carolina Classical School; St. Dunstan's Academy; and Music Formation in parishes/missions. It will be most inspirational and enjoyable to hear what the Lord is doing at this time in our Diocese.

Vocations to Holy Orders

We need men filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit and inebriated by the Blood of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There is no lack of enthusiasm in responding to the call of ministry when men are assured that the Church is sound and holds the Catholic Faith. The fact is that we could be facing a demographic priest shortage. Some might say that that could be a good problem to have, given our growth, but the bottom line is that we need more priests and deacons, good and holy priests and deacons. Soon we could have more parishes and missions than priests or deacons to serve them. The only way by which the Lord Jesus will give us more clergy is if we pray for an increase for vocations, deliberately and intentionally. Are you praying for an increase of vocations in your parish or mission? If not, please start now. Are

you praying for vocations yourself? Now is the time. And how often do we enquire of men if they might have considered a vocation to the Holy Priesthood or Diaconate? Sometimes only the question itself is enough to spark discernment. There are many more men called to the ordained ministry than those who respond and accept in faith. Only a fraction of those men called to be priests and deacons by God actually heed the call.

Why did the Lord Jesus, when He spoke of vocations, single out precisely the word *pray*? Because prayer is the expression of the yearning of the Church. The Church always gets the kind and number of priests she deserves. Why do some places have so many vocations? Because the people, deep in their faith, *want* priests, and they pray to be given the priests they want. Why do some places have so few? Because few people, even few parents, pray for priests. Can we hope to receive if we do not ask? There are hundreds of vocations dangling from heaven on cords; prayer is the sword that cuts them down for us. The laborers are available in the heart of Christ; it is our petitions that actualise them. Do we pray for the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest? What we want most ardently, the Lord of the harvest will grant. That is why Our Lord told us to pray. The search for vocations is basic - it begins on our knees. If we pray with our hearts and souls, God will answer our prayer. God gives us what we truly want.

To our priests

In our day and age, a critical reminder is needed for those who possess the very Priesthood of Christ in sacramental ordination. There is an identity crisis in the Church because there is an identity crisis in the priesthood. The one crisis is related to the other. The priesthood is neither business management nor entrepreneurialism. It is an ontological reality. There is no magic formula to ministry and Church health and growth, other than to be a faithful pastor of souls, to be conformed to Christ in His care for His people. Fidelity is the key – we are successful if we are faithful. If we love our people and sacrifice for our people, we will be united to the Cross and will achieve what Our Lord wants from our priesthood. Dear lay faithful, please bear with me for a moment – this impacts us all.

The priest is a Sacramental Man – he is the living Sacrament of Christ. He is the mediator and advocate in the one mediator and advocate. He is the representative of God to man, and man to God. The priest possesses a unique gift – it is not his own priesthood that he exercises, but he shares in Christ's one Priesthood by the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The priest is another Christ, *alter Christus*; he is *in persona Christi capitis*, in the Person of Christ the Head of the Church; he is the living icon of Christ; he is the image of the Bridegroom of the Bride, the image of Christ for and to His Church. The priest is the living instrument of Christ. He enters into the mystery of Christ's sacrifice of obedience to the heavenly Father. His job is not a 'job;' he does not function in a role: he is to BE the image of Christ. A priest is not what he does, but who he is. The ministry of the priest is ontological – a change occurs in his very being. He is given an indelible character, an invisible mark on his soul that makes him different from anyone or anything else. Please never forget that. Thither the priest should daily resort to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and recite the Divine Office. These are the marks of a faithful priest as well. We are priests in order to intercede, to shepherd, to sanctify, and to save souls – full stop.

Final thoughts

To all of us I say… Are we striving more fully to enter into the rich heritage we have received from our spiritual forefathers? Every instructed Churchman becomes a power in one's community. We may all differ in unessential matters amongst ourselves, but we should stand shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart in all Church work. We have received an anointing from on high and in Baptism and Confirmation are kings and priests unto God. It will be by the example of our own lives, consecrated and sealed as they are in Confirmation, that we will draw others to the Church. The characteristics of a Churchman should be maturity, a high sense of honour, integrity in our dealings, sobriety in our speech, beauty in our family life, intelligent commitment, humility before God, and love of His worship.

'Dig a pit for the Cross,' That is our vocation, to make the Cross present in the world, to make a place in our hearts of love for the Cross to shine forth in its splendour and power.

Make your work holy within, and God will take care of the outside!
The King's business demands haste - Press on the Kingdom!

It would be impossible adequately to thank everyone in this room who has offered so much to Our Blessed Lord to extend His Kingdom and His work in this holy Church and Diocese. If I start to thank everyone personally, we will be here another hour! So a litany of thanks this time round will not be attempted, probably to your great relief. I will make an exception here and profusely thank Lisa Ulrich, our Provincial and Diocesan Executive Administrator, without whom I would be totally lost. Thank you so very much, Lisa. To all of you - please know how very much I love and appreciate each one of you, and how much I gratefully recognise your service and labour in the Lord. Please remember I am here solely to support you, to guide you, and to serve you – so please never hesitate to contact me at any time with any joy or request or concern. Please pray for me as I always pray for you.

As I conclude, marking the one-hundredth anniversary of the restoration of the greatest shrine of Our Lady in Anglicanism, we commend our Diocese, our Province, the Anglican Joint Synods, the true Anglican expression, and all of our Christian lives and vocations to the prayers of the Ever-Virgin Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Walsingham, our spiritual Mother and Mother of the Church, who says to us… 'Whatsoever Jesus saith unto you, do it.'

God bless you all! Onward and upward.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.