

**Remarks and Observations from the
Coptic Orthodox Church on the
4th Anglican Global South to South Encounter
19th – 23rd April 2010, Singapore**

Bishop Anba Suriel
Friday 23 April, 2010

At the beginning of my speech I told a story as a way of introduction to the importance of clerical dress as a type of mission and evangelism. I encouraged the Anglican clergy to wear their clerical attire everywhere they went.

First of all I wish to thank you very much for the warm hospitality that I have received from you all. You made me truly feel comfortable and at home amongst brethren. I wish to thank our host His Grace Archbishop John Chew and all the support he has given to the small Coptic community in Singapore over the years. To all the organizers, the ladies who cooked the delicious food for us, the photographers, those who looked after the transport and indeed everyone that made our stay enjoyable and comfortable.

I want to thank all the speakers for their well prepared and thought provoking presentations that gave us so much to ponder upon throughout the week.

I must say that this week has been a great learning experience for me to understand the struggles and pain of the orthodox Anglicans of the Global South. Every morning as I prayed alongside with you, I asked the Lord to give you wisdom, to unite you and strengthen you that

you may uphold the truth of the Scriptures and witness to it with great boldness, without fear and at the same time with the love that our Lord has taught us. A love that does not fear to speak the truth to power.

As Bishop Rennis Ponniah (and I wish to thank His Grace for a very inspirational and spiritual Bible study expounded with great passion) mentioned yesterday that “An army of sheep led by a lion is more powerful than an army of lions led by a sheep.” I really pray that you lions here, the primates of each of the provinces of the Global South will stand united with one accord and say, “no to ordination of homosexuals, no to gay marriage, no to such immorality, and that it is time to purify the sanctuary of the Lord from this abomination that causes our God to suffer, bleed and be crucified again everyday!” You are martyrs without the shedding of blood because you are upholding the teaching of the Gospel handed down once and for all to the apostles.

I want to share with you a saying of Saint Anthony the Great, the father of monasticism. This great Egyptian saint said, “There will come a day when the mad people will look at the normal people and say, ‘Look at these mad people because they are not like us.’” I think this prophecy has been fulfilled in our day and age. Abnormality has become the new normality. Certain factions of the Christian Church are becoming desensitized to the truth of the Gospel. I call it the frog in the kettle syndrome. If you place a frog in a kettle at room temperature the frog will be comfortable, if you raise the temperature slightly, the frog will quickly adapt. If you continue to

raise the temperature very gradually the frog will continue to adapt to its new environment until finally the water is boiling and the frog is fried inside the kettle and loses its life. This is what today's Post Modern society is doing; it is pushing the limit of immorality further and further till it tries to make some lose their spiritual life and die.

Some of you may have read the article that was left in the foyer titled, "What if Elijah came to Synod?" It concerns my encounter with the Anglican Synod of Australia in 2001, I will not read it out but at that Synod I was hissed and booed at by the majority of the Houses of bishops, priests and laity. Why? Because I was not politically correct, and I will continue not to be politically correct till my last breath defending this Gospel of the Good News that our Lord was crucified for to bring us salvation. My brethren, I believe it is time for the Anglican Global South to make a strong stand; there is no room here for political correctness and niceties. Your young people and indeed many ecumenical partners are watching closely the outcome of this Encounter. Will a strong message go out to the rest of the Anglican Communion to repent and return to God and to return to His Holy commandments to be holy and perfect? How can anyone live a holy and perfect life whilst living an abominable lifestyle such as homosexuality and be ordained to serve God???

For example, someone like Gene Robinson who was a married man and had a daughter. He divorced his wife and left his daughter to live this unthinkable life of abomination! Is this the holiness and perfection and the image and likeness of God??? How then can such a person be ordained to the highest level of authority in a Church, the

episcopate? What example does he give to young people, what long term effects will such a decision by The Episcopal Church USA (TEC) have on the North American Episcopalians in generations to come?

I want to give you one example of how abnormality is becoming the new normality:

While homosexual activity is strong in Hollywood, the education system is being overrun by radical homosexual activists who want to begin indoctrination in the elementary school system, middle schools and high schools. In Massachusetts, where a Court recently found that the homosexuals have a constitutional right to get married, teachers and counselors receive special state-funded training for dealing with gay and lesbian students, and libraries are stocked with book and films on homosexual issues.

For example, in Framingham, Massachusetts, students were forced to answer a questionnaire that openly challenged the validity of their heterosexuality. Here are some questions:

1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
2. When did you first decide you were heterosexual?
3. Is it possible heterosexuality is a phase you will grow out of? [Of course, the flip-side of the question is not asked: Is it possible that homosexuality is phase you will grow out of.]
4. Is it possible you are heterosexual because you fear the same sex?

5. If you have never slept with anyone of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer it?
6. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexuality? How did they react?
7. Why are heterosexuals so blatant, always making a spectacle of their heterosexuality? Why can't they just be who they are, not flaunt their sexuality by kissing in public, wearing wedding rings, etc?

Notice how heterosexuality is portrayed as the abnormal behavior? If you substituted the words "homosexuality" and "opposite sex" into many of the questions, there would be a howl of protests from radical homosexual activists and their allies.

And they keep spouting these evil doctrines because they want to corrupt the world. One professor said: "Today's heresy often becomes tomorrow's orthodoxy." Well, let me say that: the orthodoxy of God will never allow for these heresies.

That is why TEC allows a heretic like Bishop Spong to promulgate his poison all over the world and publish books advocating a cocktail of heresies ranging from denying the divinity of Christ to a complete and shocking attack on the inspired Word of God. And yet at the same time they depose an orthodox Episcopal bishop for upholding the true faith of the Scriptures that marriage is between one man and one woman!!! I cannot even begin to get comprehend that.

I was listening carefully to the debate on the communiqué yesterday and I think it is important for you to perhaps in your future

encounter to not only speak more about covenant but also about conciliarity. What does it mean for a Church to be conciliar in nature. You have the structure of a hierarchical Church, laity, priests, bishops and archbishops, but is it actually practiced? Perhaps if some studies can be made, historical studies on the conciliar nature of the church and to see it from the Orthodox perspective may be helpful to you in setting up a viable structure for the Anglican Global South. It is just a suggestion for your consideration. Conciliarity of the Church as understood by the Orthodox has no room for the Gene Robinsons and Spongs of this world!

- I would like to suggest that multimedia and television/satellite channels should play an important role for the Anglican Global South. In the Coptic Orthodox Church we have found that our worldwide satellite TV channels have had a great impact on promulgating Orthodox Christian teachings. Through such channels you can teach the upcoming generations of children and youth about the proper understanding on marriage according to Biblical teachings for example.
- You may put in place special curriculums in your schools and Sunday Schools and youth programs to counter act the erroneous teachings of TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada.
- Youth – His Holiness Pope Shenouda III said, “A Church without youth is a Church without a future.” And the flipside is true also, “Youth without a Church are youth without a future.” Through National/International Festivals for children and

youth having Spiritual themes the proper teachings of the Scriptures can be taught and promoted.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in his address to Anglican clergy in 1990 on the issue of homosexuality begins by saying, “The first matter is the holiness of the Church. In the holy Creed we say, ‘We believe in one holy Church.’ This holy Church is Apostolic and Universal. In the Apostolic age, all the believers were called saints. A believer in the language of the Bible means a saint, because we are sanctified with faith, sanctified by baptism, sanctified in the holy Chrism, sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We are not merely human beings – we are temples of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is abiding in us...”

I really pray that the Anglican Global South will continue to uphold this holiness of the Church. Please do not lose hope, be strong and be united together through prayer and faith. Let no one shake you or rattle you and know that your brothers and sisters in the Coptic Orthodox Church are praying for you and your provinces and we stand firmly beside you in this upward battle that you are fighting. Darkness cannot overcome the light of the Gospel, be of good cheer the Lord tells us because in the world we will find tribulation but, He has overcome the world!

May God strengthen you all in your mission and ministry and I also ask you to pray for my Church and for the persecution she suffers on a daily basis. Thanks very much and glory be to God forever. Amen.