

SA Primate: "Good education at the heart of our capacity to grow"

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The Church has already worked with "some bright young Anglicans" to help develop an education strategy which will help strengthen what the Province is already doing in education

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By Bellah Zulu, ACNS reporting from Johannesburg

The Primate of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, the Most Revd Dr Thabo Makgoba, said good education is at the heart of the Church's capacity to grow, and that Godly education can help form, inform and transform Christians and the Church.

The Archbishop said this yesterday during the opening session of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) Provincial Synod taking place in Benoni, a city in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

The Synod, described by some delegates as "one of most well attended and representative", comprises most bishops from ACSA, many laity, ecumenical and provincial guests, and various officials from the government and civil society.

The Archbishop addressed various issues within and beyond the Province including the need for quality education in the Province, adoption of clean energy, a call to world peace, and unity in diversity within the Anglican Church.

"My hope is that through theological education we will encourage all our people to take risks in faith," he said. "We need to let ourselves be led beyond our comfort zones into places of unexpected grace and rich encounter."

"This is why I am asking Synod to look particularly not only at what we hope to achieve in each priority area, but how we aim to educate our Province to what we are doing," he said.

The Archbishop revealed that ACSA has used "some bright young Anglicans" to help develop an education strategy which will help strengthen what the Province is already doing in education as well as create more excellent church schools for all.

"Within our schools, colleges and universities we aim to form fully rounded individuals capable of analysing critically the world around us, and acting compassionately," explained the Primate.

Abp Makgoba highlighted the need for Christians not to fear differences or disagreements because “it is through wrestling together – as brothers and sisters who know our unity in Christ is greater than anything that can divide us – that we can be like rough stones polishing each other to become beautiful smooth gems.”

“God calls us instead to wrestle with one another within the body of Christ, and together to wrestle with him, so we may discern his will in the complexities of our relationships in this complex world,” he said. “Better understandings of Canon Law should help resource us to deal with difficult issues in more holy ways.”

He added: “Our world needs the combination of critical analysis and compassionate hearts. We need it in Syria, Egypt, Israel and Palestine, Kenya and Pakistan, Sudan and South Sudan. There are rarely easy answers to finding lasting peace with justice. Any attempts to find solutions through simplistic military engagement are almost certain to lead to greater violence, (but) prayer is the best route to wise action.”

Commenting on the Primate's Charge, Mr. Sakumzi Macozoma, the recipient of the Order of Simon of Cyrene for distinguished lay service to the Church said, “The text, meaning and interpretation were very appropriate to the serious and challenging times in which we live in.”

“There are so many issues in the world today that require the intervention of the Church (such as) war and violence. When it comes to education, there can be no progress on any issue unless our children are educated better. Education helps them develop their moral compass.”

Pumla Titus is the Provincial President of the Anglican Women's Fellowship and a delegate at the Synod. She said, “ I am very happy with the Archbishop's Charge because South Africa needs to put more thought and effort in the area of education. The Archbishop has challenged us to think more broadly and positively about investing in the education of our children and our clergy.”

The Revd Canon Celestino Chishimba from the Diocese of Mpumalanga agreed with the Primate on the need for cleaner sources of energy. “He made an important call to the whole African continent on the need for renewable energy which is cheaper, less harmful and helps preserve the environment.”

The Anglican Church of Southern Africa holds its Provincial Synod once every three years. It is one of the biggest Provinces in Africa comprising dioceses in Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, the island of St. Helena and Swaziland.

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