

**Remarks by**

**Sir Arthur Foulkes**

**Governor General**

**Catholic Men's Symposium**

**25 June 2010**

## **“Men and Women for Others”**

Your Grace, Archbishop Patrick Pinder

Monsignor Preston Moss, Vicar General

Other Clergy and Religious

Mr. Harry Johnson, President of the St. Francis Men's Association

Officers and Members of the Men's Association

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to join the Catholic Men's Association of St. Francis Xavier Cathedral at its 2010 Men's Symposium.

I am especially delighted that you have asked me to join you once again, after having invited me to speak at your inaugural symposium in 2007.

It is a privilege to enter into dialogue with you, the members of this fine confraternity of Catholic men at the Cathedral Parish.

### **Congratulations to Monsignor Preston Moss**

Before proceeding, I should like to offer congratulations to Monsignor Moss for the recent honour bestowed on him by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I know that he

accepts this honour on behalf of the Roman Catholic community.

He should know too, that a grateful nation thanks him for his extraordinary service, unfailing civility, and generosity beyond measure. If God spares life, it will be a great honour for me to invest Monsignor Moss with this symbol of gratitude on behalf of the Bahamian people.

I must tell you that it will be a powerful moment for me personally as he and I have shared a friendship extending over many decades.

Monsignor Moss: What a joy it will be able to share this occasion with you. It will be a moment of gratitude when we can reflect with pride on the great progress that has been made in our country and the Catholic community over more than half a century.

### **In Memoriam: Archbishop Lawrence A. Burke, S.J.**

Earlier this year, I attended the funeral of Archbishop Lawrence Burke, S.J., in Kingston, Jamaica.

I went to pay tribute to a pastor who taught us about what makes life worth living, and about how to die. Indeed, in many ways he exemplified the French expression “joie de vivre” -- the joy of living.

Like countless others, I was moved by the grace and manner of Archbishop Burke's struggle with his long illness as well as his peaceful death. I continue to be inspired by his life-long commitment to the consolidation and defence of human dignity. He was truly a man for others.

Archbishop Pinder's eloquent and heartfelt funeral homily offered a glimpse into the spirit which animated Archbishop Burke's pastoral ministry and human journey.

The exuberance for life that was characteristic of him included an extraordinary generosity of spirit. It included a fierce commitment to social justice, whether the protection of the dignity of humble immigrants or his early concern for people with HIV/AIDS when there was considerable ignorance about the disease.

Perhaps, one of the best articulations of the mission of Archbishop Burke may be found in this instruction of love and justice proposed by Fr. Pedro Arupe, a Superior General of the Society of Jesus. In addressing the alumni of various Jesuit educational institutions and apostolates, he uttered these memorable words:

“Today our prime educational objective must be to form men-and-women-for-others; men and women who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ -- for the God-man who lived and died for all the world; men and women who cannot even conceive of love of God which does not include love for the least of their neighbors; men and women completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce.”

In tribute to Archbishop Burke, I take as the theme for my remarks this evening the words of Fr. Arupe who, as a Spaniard and Superior of the Jesuit order, literally and figuratively walked in the footsteps of St. Ignatius.

That theme is: Men and Women for Others.

It is a theme which I believe wonderfully captures and resonates with your broader theme for this symposium: “The History of the Catholic Church in The Bahamas and its Contribution to Nation Building”.

I wish to speak about how the Roman Catholic community has inspired generations of clergy, religious and lay people to be men and women for others in our Commonwealth.

Archbishop Pinder, Monsignor Moss:

It is good for a speaker to know his limitations. So, I confess my own limitations right away and hasten to assert that both of you are far more knowledgeable about the history of the Catholic Church in The Bahamas than I.

So, what I propose to do is to offer my personal reflections on the Catholic community’s contributions to nation-building, particularly during the 20th century

and these early years of the 21<sup>st</sup>. I do so as one who has had the privilege of being involved in public life for several decades.

## **Bahamian Nationhood**

I should like to make an observation about the idea of Bahamian nationhood. While the Bahamas has enjoyed independent status since 1973, our nation is considerably older, more complex and with historic roots extending through many centuries.

The theme of Caribbean poet Derek Walcott's 1992 Nobel Prize for Literature Address was *Fragments of Epic Memory*. If you have not read it, I highly recommend it. It's available online.

The fragments of epic memory -- including slavery, colonialism and various liberation struggles which have fashioned our Bahamian identity -- are much older than several decades. So too are the contributions to nation-building of the Catholic Church. One prominent visual reminder of this is the former cathedral next door.

I encourage the Church's efforts in the restoration of that edifice of memory. May I also suggest that some thought be given to using a portion of that restored space as a museum? Such a museum will remind Bahamians and visitors alike of the history and contributions of the Church to nation-building.

## **Broader Themes of Roman Catholicism**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

There are broader themes from which these contributions to national development flow. These themes are ancient but ever new. Moreover, they serve as a sort of Catholic imagination which has left an indelible mark on our national psyche.

Indeed, it is not the Church's visible markers such as churches and schools that have left the most significant imprints. The influence of the Catholic Church is woven into the very tapestry of our national life, often in ways we do not readily see.

Through the Church's own unique witness to the spiritual, sacramental, scriptural and social needs of the Bahamas it has salted, leavened and enlightened our national development in a particular way.

Its **spiritual witness** recalls that the material and spiritual needs of the human person are mutual. Addressing both of these is essential for the dignity of the human person and the human family. Therefore individual conversion and social transformation are mutually important.

Its **sacramental witness** recalls, in the words of the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, that the world is charged with the grandeur and goodness of God. Despite the presence of evil, there is, I believe, the possibility of infinite grandeur and goodness in the world.



Its **scriptural witness** recalls that God unceasingly renews his creation through sinners and saints from the Prophets to St. Paul, from Ruth to Mary Magdalene, and Catholic Bahamian men and women for others like A. Leon McKinney to Sister Madene Russell to Monica Davis to Arthur Barnett, all of happy memory.

Its **social witness** recalls that Eucharistic celebration must issue forth in justice and mercy, if it is to be consistent with Gospel values. The values and virtues of Catholic witness have helped to make our country profoundly more civil, more just and more spiritually rich.

Those who guide, serve and nurture the Church should never despair of its mission or of its accomplishments. But neither should they become complacent about the current demands and the signs of the times with which our nation and the world are confronted.

### **Common Loftier Goals**

Your Grace and Dear Friends:

A Bahamas struggling towards Majority Rule -- or what I like to refer to as the Second Emancipation -- and a worldwide and Bahamian Catholic community increasingly more committed to the struggle for justice, shared many common loftier goals during the last century.

Those goals included a commitment to human equality and the eradication of racism along with the achievement of a greater measure of social and economic justice.

Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (*New Things*), published in 1891, forecast Catholicism's increasing insistence on greater rights for labour and the duties of capital to improve the benefits and conditions of workers.

Well before the state provided for universal access to education, the Catholic Church in the Bahamas, primarily through the Benedictines and the Sisters of Charity, helped to build our nation through one of the more essential instruments of national development.

We now take for granted the gift of Catholic education to the nation. Of course, the institutional Church also had to overcome its own prejudices and limitations on the issue of race and class around the world and in the Bahamas.

But because of its own conversion, Catholicism's gift of an empowering education to poor and racially marginalized Bahamians was transformative and, I dare say, revolutionary.

I recall here the great work of men for others like Father Frederic Frey, whose extraordinary vision still has resonance today. I recall too, Bahamian men for others, such as Sir Samuel Johnson, Deacon Leviticus Adderley and Vincent

Ferguson.

These men were all deeply committed to the holistic development of our people. They all had a passion for justice. They represented much of the best of the Catholic spirit. They used their intelligence and talents mostly for the common good, and never simply for public recognition or personal reward.

The same can be said for many Bahamian and other religious and lay women, who dedicated themselves to a life of love and labour, making the Sermon on the Mount real in every corner of the Bahamas and many areas of national life.

### **Civil and Political Rights**

Dear Friends:

The 1950s saw the emergence of a cadre of other men for others who were inspired by their Catholic faith and the needs of their country to advance the civil and political rights of the majority of Bahamians.

These men included the likes of Sir Etienne Dupuch, A. Leon McKinney, Sir Henry Taylor, Cyril Stevenson, Clement Pinder and Eugene Newry.

Because of my Inagua roots, I cannot fail to mention that both Mr. McKinney and Sir Etienne ran for my home island. While the former was unsuccessful, the latter represented the area for some time.

The stories of just these two men are utterly fascinating. Sir Etienne as a young man who had inherited a newspaper was taken under the wing of a Benedictine priest, Fr. Chrysostom Schreiner, who taught him how to write and sent him to a Catholic institution in America to further his education.

This great Bahamian proceeded to straddle Bahamian journalism for many decades and his struggling newspaper was transformed into a powerful advocate for social and political reform and an implacable crusader for racial equality.

I am proud to say that he was my professional mentor and that his struggle was an inspiration to me.

Your Grace and Monsignor Moss: I know of your affection for Mr. McKinney, and I share that fondness.

If ever the appellation of “a man before his time” was rightly applied to anyone, it was most certainly so of Leon McKinney. His vision of economic empowerment for thousands of his fellow Bahamians took concrete shape with the establishment of the People’s Penny Savings Bank, an institution that was also before its time.

The life and witness of this visionary Catholic layman should not be allowed to fade from the national memory. Some way should be found to recall and celebrate his contribution to the building of the Bahamian nation.

Incidentally, Mr. McKinney and another prominent Catholic layman and nation-builder, Maxwell Thompson, many decades ago were part of a group that started a fellowship movement for Bahamian men -- the Lunch Bunch -- which continues to this day and meets every Tuesday.

### **Movements for Change**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

During the Fifties and Sixties there were several movements for change which sought to empower and enfranchise the marginalized and disenfranchised peoples of the world, including the poor, people of various ethnic and racial backgrounds, and women.

While those decades may have produced some excesses, I believe, on balance, that most of the fruits of such change have been positive. I say this from the vantage point of having seen both the negative and positive effects over some 50 years.

The background to this rapid change was a fractured world which emerged out of the searing terror of World War II and settled into a cold war between two

superpowers. The end of World War II also set in motion various struggles for decolonization which swept through Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Americas.

In 1958, with the election of Angelo Roncalli as Pope John XXIII, the Catholic Church was also set to go through its own extraordinary changes. It began to open its heart to new movements of the spirit and urgent signs of the times within the Church and the world.

In 1961, Pope John published his social encyclical, *Mater et Magister*, which took as its theme, *Christianity and Social Progress*. That theme was a fitting expression of what many Bahamian men and women of faith were seeking in their denominations here at home.

They wanted a community of faith that was committed to social and economic progress and an end to racial segregation and discrimination.

I fondly remember giants like the Rev. Dr. H. W. Brown of Bethel Baptist Church who early and vigorously supported the movement for majority rule and economic and social justice. Many other religious leaders were less enthusiastic and less forthcoming.

In the interest of history and of not glossing over the past, some of the leadership of the Catholic community during that period could have been more vigorous in their support. They could also have been less accommodating of those who sought to keep in place an entrenched system of minority rule and economic inequality.

I well remember the vigorous debates some of us had with our teacher and friend, Fr. Brendan Forsythe, on these matters. I also remember the more sympathetic conversations we had with the saintly Fr. Prosper Meyer who happened to be black.

Of course, like all of us, every institution is ever in need of conversion. Indeed, the Church's subsequent contributions to national development have been fulsome. Pope John's calling of the Second Vatican Council thrilled many Catholics and others throughout the world.

Many of us reasoned that the season of change which was occurring around the world would help to usher in majority rule, economic and social justice and independence here at home. It was with these hopes that many of us fought the 1962 general election.

That election took place on November 26, just weeks after the Second Vatican Council opened in the previous month. The progressive movement lost that electoral contest because of a rigged system that gave the minority of votes but majority of seats to those who sought to continue minority rule to the detriment of the majority.

While many were deeply disappointed by the 1962 results, we redoubled our efforts in preparation for 1967. I recently reviewed letters I sent to a friend living in Israel during the period following the 1962 loss. Not only did I remain enthusiastic about the chances for 1967; I was certain that that election would usher in Majority Rule.

Between 1962 and 1967, the Catholic Church published a number of documents which inspired many of us fighting for a more just and egalitarian Bahamian society. In 1963, *Pacem In Terris (Peace on Earth)* was issued under the name of Pope John XXIII, who had died two months after the encyclical was completed.

It was the first such encyclical which did not address Catholics only, but also “all men of goodwill”. That social encyclical reflected on the question of peace during many of the more difficult days of the Cold War.

Then in 1965, two years before the achievement of Majority Rule, the Second Vatican Council issued one of the Catholic Church’s more profound statements on the modern world and its commitment to that world. Indeed this document was known as the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*.

In the document also known as *Gaudium et Spes (Joy and Hope)*, these famous opening words captured a world-wide spirit as well as the movement for racial, social and economic justice here at home.

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

For some of us who were to operate at the very core of the progressive moment,



these documents inspired and intensified our debates which started in the late Fifties. One of our early favourite venues for these debates was the home of my friend Dr. Newry.

We were accused by some of being radicals, Communists; and, I must confess, we did indeed read and debate Communist doctrine. But, I am happy to say, at that crucial point in our development, Karl Marx lost the debate.

There were other venues for debates, including St. Augustine's Monastery, where on one occasion we had a stimulating encounter with Professor Greenwood of Catholic University of America. We had invited him to address us on the ethical and moral issues of resistance to oppression.

On January 10, 1967, the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the majority of Bahamians were given extraordinary expression in the advent of Majority Rule. The year 1967 would also usher in new challenges and opportunities for the Catholic Church.

## **Jubilee Celebrations**

Dear Friends:

The Archdiocese recently celebrated its Golden Jubilee as a Diocese, which occurred approximately seven years before Majority Rule. During this past half a

century the Catholic legacy in terms of national development is profound. I will touch briefly on a number of areas.

The Church's educational and social apostolates have educated and ministered to many thousands from school children, to the poor, to those in prison, to those struggling with HIV/AIDS, to young people struggling with new challenges, to those confronted with the tragedy of domestic violence.

The Church, in its own words, is "perfecting and penetrating the temporal sphere with the spirit of the Gospel".

The Catholic Church is at the periphery and the margins of society in terms of the needs of those whose spirits and bodies are broken and marginalized. That is a privileged place for the followers of Christ to be. But with this privilege comes the responsibility to make the Church's option for the poor and vulnerable ever more vigorous.

The Catholic Church is also at the centre of the nation's political, economic and social life in terms of the reach of its laity. This is also a place of privilege for the followers of Christ.

This privilege comes with the responsibility to transform the structures of society just as those men and women who fought for Majority Rule and independence sought to do. I have no doubt that Catholics will continue to bring an animating spirit to national life.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the core of the Catholic imagination is a commitment to service and charitable outreach. Indeed, the Church has one of the finest social apostolates in the Bahamas. This is not of recent vintage. This is at the core of who the Church understands itself to be. There is no Catholic identity without a commitment to service and the demands of justice.

Equally important is the strong moral framework of the Catholic Social Tradition that the Church brings to bear on issues of public policy and social justice. The local Church's fine tradition of pastoral statements on a variety of issues is an important voice in the public commons.

From Bishop Paul Leonard Hagarty, O.S.B., to the first Bahamian ordinary, Archbishop Pinder, the Catholic community has spoken on issues as diverse as upholding the dignity of humble immigrants to restorative justice to care for the environment to the importance of responsible and active citizenship by Catholic men and women for others.

The principles of the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching inspired me as a young man. They inspired me in my own work to help bring about political, social and economic change for the Bahamian people.

Those ideals still resonate today although I am less sure that they are as well known by the laity and the thousands of young people the Church educates. The need for this ministry of preaching and teaching about the just word is as urgent today as it was in my youth.

## **Enduring Themes of Catholic Social Teaching**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Even as we celebrate the Church's marvellous past, we look to its promising future. Indeed, the country continues to look to this community of faith for social action and prophetic witness, spiritual guidance and civic participation.

As the Church responds to the signs of the times, may it do so with timeless wisdom. Towards this end:

Remind us of the radical dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God, and that any attack on this dignity is an offence to the Creator.

Remind us that this dignity carries with it basic freedoms and inalienable human rights.

Remind us of a common good that transcends the dead-end of extreme individualism and the cul-de-sac of narrow self-interests.

Remind us that this common good requires individual responsibility and social obligations.

Remind us that solidarity requires us to live by that most fundamental law of love heralded in the Sermon on the Mount. Who is my neighbour? I believe that the Samaritan has answered that question for the ages.

It is an answer which may make us uncomfortable. But I learned long ago in the struggle for racial equality, that whenever the religious community becomes too comfortable, progress is often delayed.

Remind us of the dignity of all legitimate labour and of the rights of workers, as well as the obligation of labour to be responsible.

Remind us that any social arrangement or system which marginalizes the poor and vulnerable is inherently unjust.

Remind us of the urgent need to be stewards of God's creation amidst the challenges of climate change and other potential threats to our environment.

As I travelled north through the Bahamas archipelago after my recent trip to Inagua, I marvelled at the exquisite and extraordinary beauty of our land.

In its own way, the protection of this richness and heritage is as important as was the struggle for Majority Rule. I commend to us all this great challenge of our 21st century.

## **Conclusion**

Dear Friends:

It does an old warrior's heart good to see the Church embarking on its next 50 years led by a son of the soil and a mostly Bahamian presbyterate, religious and lay leadership.

I have no doubt that under this leadership the Catholic imagination will be renewed and reinvigorated and that it will become even more indigenous and creative so as to inspire a new generation of Bahamians.

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