

Vision Groups Synod Presentation: Continuing to Live the Vision

Prophetic Social Justice-Making: William Wilberforce

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I am William Wilberforce, and I have a vision for a world where all are free and all have the opportunity to prosper. I must admit, being a person born of privilege, that it took me a goodly amount of time to embrace such a vision. You see, for a good part of my life, even in the early days of my parliamentary career, I was Christian in name only. In those days I was far more concerned with my own personal advancement than with the advancement of God's kingdom.

But Christ transformed my heart. And everything changed. I realized that my purpose in life was not about stuff, status and power, but about furthering God's loving purposes. To this end, I zealously worked to abolish slavery throughout the Empire. Certainly I was aware of my own inadequacy to be a champion for such a great cause; but God urged me on. And how could a Christian note? The slave trade, after all, is "founded in iniquity" and boasts a horrifying slave mortality rate of about 50 percent during the voyage from Africa. As I said in one of my many speeches in the House of Commons, "I could not believe that the same Being who forbids rapine and bloodshed, had made rapine and bloodshed necessary to the well-being of any part of his universe," even the West Indies. This great cause, along with my support for the burgeoning literacy movement and the humane treatment of animals, was formed the pinnacle of my life's work as a disciple.

Striving for justice takes time, it takes energy, and it takes perseverance. But it is a task to which our Lord and Saviour calls each and every one of us. I stand before you as someone who has worked to overcome the injustice. But in every time and place, new sources of iniquity, marginalization and oppression arise. Human trafficking – or modern slavery – and income inequity, the devastation the natural world and food security are some of the great causes that God is calling you to prophetically respond to through your life and witness; for each generation of the Baptised is called to strive for justice and peace among all peoples and to respect the dignity of every human being.

And so my, friends, this work continues.