

**“Healing and Transformation  
Given in Christ  
Fulfilled through the Spirit”**

**CCC 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Panama, June 11, 2005**

**Homily of Rev. Dr. Lesley Anderson delivered at the Inaugural Ceremony of the 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.**

We have come together as the people of God, to celebrate the presence of the resurrected Christ, who is both Healer and Transformer, and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. We have come in faith and trust, to place within the hands of God and the direction of the Holy Spirit, this 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Caribbean Conference of Churches. I am particularly happy that we are meeting in my country of birth, the Republic of Panama, the crossroads of the world and the world’s most beautiful gem.

I am without words to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to the many dignitaries, ecumenical luminaries, people of other Faiths, and our sisters and brothers in Christ, for the presence with us.

It would be remiss of me if I were not to express my personal gratitude and appreciation to the officers and members of the Ecumenical Committee of Panama and all those cited by the General Secretary, Mr. Gerard Granado, for a special word of thanks and appreciation. I wish to include the staff of Hotel Continental, the young people who are assisting us so well and the many others who have worked quietly and diligently behind the scenes, including our own CCC staff.

I

Today we are living in a time of war and violence, terrorism and stringent security measures, certainly, a time of revolutionary and extraordinary changes. In the midst of these changes, people are living in darkness, despair and discouragement. The homeless, the downtrodden and dispossessed are everywhere and those who are suffering injustice, human indignity and unbelievable poverty in a world where there is more than enough for all, cry out in desperate hope for healing and transformation that will lead to a new day and a new way of life.

In addition to these are the abused, misused and abandoned children and thousands of others, experiencing the unimaginable pain of human misery. They are the marginalised helpless, the socially defenceless, the culturally despised and economically exploited, all living lives of hopelessness.

This 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly theme is both biblical and theological, for it is rooted in Scripture and is a Christian affirmation of Jesus Christ, who remains unalterably the centre and focus of the new. He comes as the Healer and Transformer, offering himself without reserve to us, as the One who has already conquered the structures and powers of sin and death.

This theme is a call to celebration and ecumenical togetherness, a call that is intended to deepen our commitment to Christ and dedication to His Church, a call that challenges us to declare his healing power, his reconciling love and transforming power.

In light of the present critical situation in the world and in our region, it is imperative that the CCC be inspired by a new vision, without which the people will perish.

The vision is a utopia of healing and transformation made possible in Christ and grounded in the Caribbean and the Americas, our beloved region.

The CCC is called by God to give our people new hope

The CCC is called by God to give our people new confidence to face the terrors and structures of evil.

The CCC is called by God to give our people new strength and proclaim and celebrate new life in the midst of death.

This vision of healing and transformation is sacrificial – it requires death to self, for it involves a ministry to and for others – a ministry that affirms hope and confirms life.

This vision of healing and transformation is biblical. It requires following Christ all the way to Calvary's cross in order to become healers and transformers like him, who offers to all – hope and new life – this is Good News to the poor.

The CCC must ever stand ready to identify with and walk alongside the suffering poor, the poorest of the poor, remembering that our mandate was and still is: “Promoting Ecumenism and Social Change in Obedience to Jesus Christ and in Solidarity with the Poor.”

This implies breaking down the walls of oppression, conflict, sexism, racism, and anything else that separates and threatens to destroy a healthy relationship between people. Individually and corporately, denominationally and ecumenically, we must stand ready to offer healing and transformation to all – both rich and poor.

Like Jesus we must commit ourselves to those who have no food, no water, no clothes, no homes, and no health. The CCC must stand with those whose lives have been shattered by HIV/AIDS, whose minds are in shock and bodies, weak and limp, and so are in need of healing. If we can assure and reassure people that this is our obligation, people will have expectations of a better life now – not after death!

## II

The expectation of a healed and transformed life for all must set the foundation for establishing a theological base for healing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This healing of which I speak is under-girded by confident trust in possibilities and belief in God's ability to renew and make us whole. "With him", we say, 'all things are possible'

This is a challenge to all of us to look to Jesus, who preached the Gospel to the poor, healed the broken hearted, preached deliverance to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind and set at liberty those that were bruised. His whole life pattern and ministry was a testimony of God's sign of healing and transformation in a sick and broken world.

This is a challenge to all of us to look to Jesus, who was stripped and whipped; who was crowned with thorns; who was mocked and spat upon; who was nailed on a cross between two thieves; who died and was buried, and on the third day, through the power of the living God, rose from the dead, and gives us the victory. A victory that is transforming, for it is a victory with a difference and the difference is this – with Jesus, Healer and Transformer, the world can never be the same again.

This same Jesus, who gives us the victory, gives us a statement about healing and transformation; it is a statement about the resurrection and therefore about life. His victory radicalised and transformed the disciples from men of fear to powerhouses of courage to make a difference to their society.

This same Jesus, who gives us the victory, challenges us to go forward, for he has provided for us; he has made all things possible which had appeared impossible. So if, we are to experience for ourselves, healing and transformation, we must trust God more and obey! In addition, we have to be with Jesus. We need to walk like Jesus. We need to pray like Jesus – "Father, not my will, but Yours be done."

So, we press on, for there is a balm in Gilead and there is physician in Gilead and he is here with us and his name is Jesus. So when our 'grief is beyond healing' and our 'heart is sick within us' (Jeremiah 8:18), he reaches out to us and heals us. When we sin, stumble and fall, he calls us to repentance, forgives us and picks us up, to send us healed and transformed to serve the present age our calling to fulfil. There is multitude of people out there who are in need of healing and transformation. People who are lonely and lost! People who are homeless and hungry! People who are hurt and suffering! Somebody needs to tell them that Jesus cares! Somebody needs to tell them that Jesus loves them! Somebody needs to tell them that Jesus heals and is ready to transform their lives!

The story of the healing of the paralytic in Mark's Gospel is a combination of faith and healing. It speaks of the relationship between body and spirit. It speaks of Jesus and of his ability to take away both physical and spiritual pain.

Some men brought their friend, a paralytic, to be healed by Jesus. It was difficult to enter the house because of the crowd. They cannot get to Jesus. They tried and were not successful, but they did not give up. They persevered and found a way to climb to the roof. They dug a hole in the roof to let their friend down into the presence of the healing power of Jesus. Jesus sees their faith and healed their friend. Their togetherness is at the

same time our sign and challenge to rediscover what it means to be a community united in faith and purpose.

United in faith and purpose, we can heal and transform through the living Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. We can, as a result, make life more meaningful, more beautiful, more glorious, more joyful, more exciting and more hopeful for people, as we break the chains of death and open the window of life in the name of Jesus, the Healer, of every disease, of every conflict, of every disunity and of any situation.

May we be truly one in mind, heart, soul and spirit, as we reach out with Christ's help to do all that we have to do.

Amen!