



[Additional reporting by the Anglican Communion News Service]

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has welcomed the consecration of three new missionary bishops by the Primate of South America, as part of plans for the Diocese of Peru to become its own province.

Archbishop Justin, who welcomed the Bishop of Peru to Lambeth Palace last month, described the consecration of the first three indigenous bishops in the country as a “bountiful spiritual harvest”.

The new bishops, Alejandro Mesco, Juan Carlos Revilla, and Jorge Luis Aguilar, will work alongside the Bishop of Peru, the Rt Revd William Godfrey, and will have responsibility for three of four newly carved out missionary areas, which will soon become dioceses: Arequipa, in the south of Peru; Chiclayo, in the north of Peru; Huancayo, in the central highlands; and Lima, the capital of Peru which sits on the Pacific coast.

In a message that was read out at the consecration service at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Lima on Sunday, Archbishop Justin said that he received news of the development with “immense joy”.

“During my visit in September 2014, I learnt of how this diocese grew from eight churches and four clergy in 1998 to an impressive 50 clergy and 50 communities in 2014, and you are still growing,” he said.

“You set an example to the whole Communion, and we rejoice that the church marches forward.

“I also noted with delight the emphasis on discipleship and the heavy use of Lectio Divina. May God continue to prosper the efforts of the workers and congregations in this fertile mission field.”

In his message Archbishop Justin, who signed his letter as “your fellow servant in Christ”, used the words of St Paul to Timothy (2 Tim 4:2-3): “I solemnly urge you to preach the message, to insist upon proclaiming it (whether the time is right or not), to convince, reproach, and encourage as you teach with all patience.”

During the consecration service, at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Lima, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, congratulated the Primate of South America, Archbishop Tito Zavala, “for challenging the people of Peru to keep proclaiming the Gospel and grow to becoming a separate Province as soon as possible.”

Dr Idowu-Fearon also congratulated the diocesan bishop “for his willingness to give up his large territory and carve out three new missionary dioceses for growth.”

In an address to the congregation, he said that the three new bishops “are to focus on proclaiming the Gospel. Doctrines are helpful but only the

Gospel saves. They are to proclaim Christ, serve the people and the church will grow.”

He also spoke about the cost of mission work. The congregation, he said, “should be ready and willing to support the new bishops with all they will need for growing the church.

“Mission is costly and you must be willing to make sacrifices.”

He also implored the bishops to work as a team, supporting each other and sharing resources, gifts and ideas; and to “never allow the spirit of unhealthy competition.”

The Diocese of Peru’s roots date back to 1846 when the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jose Gregorio Paz-Soldan gave permission for an Anglican mission to be established in Callao – the first non-Roman Catholic church to be allowed in the country.

The church was created to serve the English-speaking ex-patriate community from Britain and North America; but it is now strongly committed to all of Peruvian society.

“Peruvian congregations are now the overwhelming majority, even though there is still a live English-speaking congregation at the Cathedral,” Bishop Godfrey says on the diocesan website. “National clergy and lay ministers make the Church and its worship relevant to the people they serve in Christ’s name and in many of our congregations Latin American Christian music enhances the worship.”

The mother-church of the diocese is the Good Shepherd Cathedral in Lima; and there are around 50 churches and missions situated in Lima and Arequipa, as well as church-planting missions in Juliaca, Cusco, Puno, Cabanaconde, and the outlying poorer areas of Lima.

“It is a dynamic and growing Church which is committed to the preaching of the Gospel, Christian education, and social outreach work,” the Cathedral says on its website. With the exception of the Cathedral, its congregations are Spanish-speaking.

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