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## The conclusion of the Synod of the Church of England. Focus on the environment, fight on abuse and help to the poor

A more ambitious target than the British Government's with regard to reaching zero CO2 emissions, full support to the government's inquiry into abuses - pledging compensation for the victims - and the decision to cover the costs and organize the funerals of the poorest, now borne by the State. These were the key items on the agenda of the General Synod of the Church of England that met this week, Monday to Thursday, at Church House, home of the headquarters of the Church of England, a few steps away from Parliament and Westminster Abbey. It was also the last meeting for many members of the three chambers of the governing body of the Church of England. Bishops, pastors and lay people will be re-elected during the summer and the new college will be inaugurated between the 23rd and 25th of November with a special ceremony in Westminster Abbey to be attended by Queen Elizabeth. **The Church is still racist.** Halfway through the Synod, Anglican Primate Justin Welby made very strong statements on the subject of racism. *"The Church of England is still deeply institutionally racist," said the Archbishop of Canterbury who added that he "was ashamed"* and voted to apologize for the way in which the Church and State in Britain have excluded countless Black, Asian and minority ethnic over the past decades. The so-called "Windrush generation", arrived in Britain starting in the 1950s, includes full-fledged British citizens who were deported or denied the right to remain by Theresa May's government. **Zero emissions by 2030.** On Wednesday, *the Synod decided to adopt the zero net emissions target by 2030 at the latest, 20 years earlier than Boris Johnson's government that aims to eliminate greenhouse gases by 2050.* "The plan is to ensure energy-efficiency in every parish with a view to preventing heat loss by improving thermal insulation in buildings. It's a major challenge given that we are in charge of 40,000 buildings, many of them ancient and even dating back to the Middle Ages," Bishop Nicholas Holtam, head of the diocese of Salisbury and spokesman for the environment, told SIR. **The apologies of the Archbishop of Canterbury.**

### "We need to listen to your voices"

said Primate Justin Welby to victims of abuse during the debate on the motion that asked the Synod to support the recommendations of the "Independent inquiry into child sexual abuse" that since 2015 investigates responses of various institutions to allegations of abuse, including Westminster Parliament. The Archbishop of Canterbury then read the message of a survivor of abuse who thanked the Bishop of Bath and Wells Peter Hancock for having created safe spaces within the Church where victims could share their pain and receive help. The Bishop of Huddersfield, Jonathan Gibbs, who will take over safeguarding responsibilities from bishop Hancock, promised victims they will receive appropriate and due compensation. For the Church it will be a burden of several million pounds, several million Euros, but *"the response to sexual abuse," Bishop Gibbs said, "must be guided by the justice and compassion of the Kingdom of God, not by the Church's own will to protect its reputation and financial interests.* **No more 'paupers' funerals.** In a move guided by generosity and compassion, the Church of England has decided to create a working group tasked with determining whether it is possible to end so called "paupers' funerals" - those unable to afford funeral costs – that increased by 70% in the years 2015 - 2018. These ceremonies are very sad because municipal administrations are forced to intervene to provide burials for people without financial means and they celebrate the service anonymously, also refusing to return the ashes to family members. *During the first day of the Synod, Monday 10, the recent statement of the Chamber of Bishops, which reaffirmed that "only heterosexual marriage between a man and a woman is the right context for sexual relations", sparked off a series of questions.* Also with regard to the theme of sexuality, the Synod listened to a report on "Living in love and faith", a project launched in February

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2017 to produce resources that will help parishes and dioceses to learn how questions about human identity, relationships, marriage and sexuality fit within the bigger picture a Christian vision of living holy lives. Finally, the Synod adopted a plan of sport initiatives to be implemented in seven dioceses, entailing the creation of football clubs and fitness classes as opportunities to disseminate the Christian message.

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