

# Promoting Authentic Development in Nigeria

*Communiqué issued at the End of the Second Plenary Meeting  
of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN)  
at the Bishop Anthony Nwedo Pastoral Centre, Umuahia, Abia State,  
8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.*

## **Preamble**

1. We, the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, held our Second Plenary Meeting for the year 2012 at the Bishop Anthony Nwedo Pastoral Centre, Umuahia. Having prayerfully reflected on various issues in the Church and Nation, we now present our communiqué - **Promoting Authentic Development in Nigeria**

## **Some Highlights in the Church**

2. With thankful hearts to God, we recall the installation of Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins, former Bishop of Abeokuta, as Metropolitan Archbishop of Lagos to succeed the Archbishop Emeritus, Anthony Cardinal Olubunmi Okogie, who had courageously given exemplary leadership not only to the See of Lagos, but the entire Nigerian populace in difficult times. Most Rev. Bulus Dauwa Yohanna was on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2012, consecrated for the Vicariate of Kontagora, to succeed the Bishop Emeritus, Bishop Timothy Carrol, SMA, who in 2010 retired and returned to Ireland.

We cherish the visit to Nigeria of the President of the Vatican Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, March 23-30, 2012, which contributed in deepening our efforts in Inter-Religious Dialogue, particularly, with our Muslim compatriots.

The dioceses of Minna and Ilorin celebrated the centenary of the presence of the Catholic Church in August 2012. The diocese of Enugu will follow suit to celebrate its Golden Jubilee on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012. On the 10<sup>th</sup> November, the Owerri Ecclesiastical Province also will celebrate its centenary. We congratulate the Archbishop, Bishops and the faithful of these Ecclesiastical territories and we pray for their sustainable growth in the faith. We happily announce that the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Fernando Cardinal Filoni, will grace with his presence the Owerri centenary celebration.

We congratulate the President of our Conference, Archbishop of Jos, Most Rev. Ignatius Kaigama, who on the 4<sup>th</sup> July received in Italy the International Golden Dove Peace Award. We also congratulate the Metropolitan of Abuja, Most Rev. John Onaiyekan, for winning the International Peace Award to be conferred on him in Brussels on October 31, 2012. We commend their efforts in sowing seeds of peace and harmonious coexistence between Christians and Muslims of our nation.

With faith in God, we pray for the souls of Most Rev. Anthony Ilonu, the Bishop Emeritus of Okigwe, who died on the 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2012, and Most Rev. Emmanuel Otteh, the Bishop Emeritus of Issele Uku, who died on the 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, and have since been buried. We continue to cherish the services they rendered while alive. We pray for the Bishops and the faithful of their dioceses.

## **Gratitude for God's Blessings**

3. It is right and fitting that we continue to thank God for daily and special blessings. In spite of all our tension and strife, we remain one united country; we keep praying that we remain so. We note some significant improvements in a few areas of our national life, like the energy sector and the efforts to improve infrastructure in some States of the country.

We commend some efforts to redress past injustices, particularly in the return and rehabilitation of schools and hospitals in certain States of the Federation. We hope other States will follow this laudable action.

We praise the courage of those patriotic Nigerians who have revealed facts and details of corruption in the oil sector and we continue to insist on proper investigation and prosecution of culprits, and sanitization of our national life.

We thank and commend all those Nigerians, who, in various national and international fora, exert themselves to bring glory and honour to our dear country, Nigeria.

### **Abuse of Human Rights and Dignity**

#### *Protection of Life*

4. Nigerians continue to live in fear and tension. In spite of the acclaimed efforts to beef up security in the nation, bombings and senseless killings of innocent Nigerians, continue in the northern part of the country, while kidnappings and periodic murders and armed robberies continue in the southern part.

The failure of government at all levels and other security agencies to provide adequate security for all Nigerians is a grave form of abuse of human dignity. This unfortunate situation leads to distrust of government and allied authorities. It creates loopholes for evil doers to thrive and for the proliferation of arms and dangerous weapons under the guise of self-defence.

In the face of sustained attacks on Christians and churches in Northern Nigeria, we insist that our patient response is not borne out of cowardice, but of universal Christ-like love, religious maturity and genuine patriotism. We fear that in the face of continued unprovoked onslaught, Christians might resort to legitimate self-defence.

We call on government at the Federal, State and Local levels and security agencies to wake up to their duty to protect and defend the life and the dignity of everybody in this country. Government should be more vigilant, especially at the borders, in checkmating any foreign sponsors of terrorist activities in Nigeria. We commend those Muslim and Christian leaders who are raising their voices to condemn the ongoing barbarism. We also commend those politicians, and all Nigerians of goodwill who are earnestly working for a better, safer and more united Nigeria and ask them not to relent.

#### *The Debasement of Human Sexuality*

5. We denounce the relentless efforts of many Western nations' development programmes and the United Nations' agencies to pressurize and manipulate countries in Africa, especially Nigeria, to embrace an anti-life culture and anti-life programmes, namely, artificial family planning, under the guise of population control, eradication of HIV-AIDS, and the promotion of so-called women's reproductive health rights. Abortion and contraception – which form the basis of this anti-life mentality and aggravate the culture of death, give rise to a libertine culture of promiscuity. As Catholics, we reiterate that the use of contraceptives is immoral and sinful and we recommend only Natural Family Planning, abstinence and self-control.

Nigerians should, through the prism of good religious and cultural values, learn to reject decadent values, in order to evolve wholesome responses to global issues. The recent allocation by the Federal Government of millions of dollars for the supply of contraceptives is both unfair and immoral. Most Nigerians simply would not support such an insensitive use of public funds.

Above all, and as a life affirming strategy, Nigeria needs to establish good health-care systems to take care of women and children at the pre-natal, neo-natal, paediatric and later levels.

#### *Fighting Corruption*

6. Serious allegations of corruption have been levelled at some top government officials and other Nigerians. Very little, however, has been done to thoroughly investigate and prosecute the culprits. Those who have been indicted have either escaped from custody or been granted indefinite bail, or have been set free. The Nigerian citizenry has the right to receive comprehensive reports on the management of Fuel Subsidy, along with appropriate application of justice on the criminals. Fighting corruption demands courage and sincerity, and the fight has to start from the top to the lowest cadre.

Politics in Nigeria is still perceived by many in authority more as a self-serving pursuit, opportunity for easy money and prestige, than as genuine service for the good of all. Recent probes on Fuel Subsidy have exposed the depth of corruption in the highest echelons of our government.

This cankerworm of corruption, unfortunately, also affects other sectors of Nigerian life, even to the grassroots. Lip-service is paid to fundamental issues, such as youth empowerment, job creation, quality education that is affordable, agriculture, etc., with little or no action to redeem election campaign promises. This situation compromises the credibility of the current transformation agenda of the government.

To eradicate corruption, graver responsibility falls on those in public life whose acts of public administration ought to be regulated by due process and the rule of law. To regain the trust of citizens demands a certain definite firmness on the part of the government in pursuing sound and clear objectives, along with disinterested application of justice.

We challenge the President and the leadership of this nation to address with greater courage, forthrightness and political will the problem of corruption. We, therefore, strongly appeal to President Goodluck Jonathan and his administration to enforce due process and the rule of law in public administration.

### **Call to Better Governance**

7. Nigeria cannot become a safe, secure and united nation without good governance. Good governance entails active and critical participation of the citizenry in the formulation of policies and in their implementation. The Nigerian government at every level should educate and inform the citizens about the political and economic choices it makes in their name. This will constitute the appropriate response to the people's right to good stewardship, transparency and accountability.

In support of this, Pope Benedict XVI said to African political leaders during his November 2011 visit to the Republic of Benin: "Do not deprive your peoples of hope! Do not cut them off from their future by mutilating their present! Adopt a courageous ethical approach to your responsibilities and, if you are believers, ask God to grant you wisdom!.."

In relation to this, we call for caution in the acquisition of foreign and domestic loans by the Federal and State governments without due consultation with the citizenry. This would adversely affect proper economic growth and mortgage the future of our country.

#### *Promoting Integral Education*

8. Catholic education entails the integral formation of the human person with a view to optimal service to God, humanity and society. Catholic schools have the distinction of guaranteeing healthy, cultural and educational pluralism which makes them welcoming to all.

We, therefore, challenge all our Catholic educational institutions to draw from the Catholic Policy on Education to consistently improve the quality of their educational services. Given the universal success of Catholic education, we recommend this policy to other interested educational institutions.

Grants-in-aid to Mission schools, to enable Nigerian children in such schools enjoy their right to free quality education, is a necessary and commendable contribution to the improvement of education in Nigeria.

Growing a new Nigeria through education requires that knowledge should be communicated along with values to be acquired and truths to be discovered. The absurd culture of examination malpractices by pupils, students, teachers, parents, guardians and administrators must be tackled with utmost seriousness, otherwise, our efforts will be in vain.

Our nation also needs to invest in media education, especially to protect our young generations from the ills of the new social media and equip them to engage the communications technology in a critical manner.

9. Veritas University, Abuja, the Catholic University of Nigeria, is an initiative of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, on behalf of the entire Catholic Church in Nigeria. Given its crucial role in the Church and in the nation, we call on our laity and other people of good will to provide the necessary resources to sustain the university and move it from its temporary site at Obehie to its permanent site in Abuja.

### **The Year of Faith (11 October 2012 – 24 November 2013)**

10. The Year of Faith which marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council calls for evangelization which “essentially consists in bearing witness to Christ in the power of the Spirit by one’s life, then by one’s words, in a spirit of openness and respectful dialogue with others, while holding fast to the values of the Gospel.” (*Africae Munus*, n. 163). Benedict XVI stated that by celebrating the Year of Faith, “we cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden” (*Porta Fidei*, nn. 3,6).

The beginning of the Year of Faith, the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012, opening of the Vatican Synod on New Evangelization which will discuss the proclamation of faith with new ardour, new method and expression. It will be a period to examine different trends, traditional and modern, which threaten our faith. We shall at all times, as Bishops, teach the faith and salvation in and through the Cross of Christ, against the so-called ‘gospel of prosperity’ which emphasizes miracles, quick wealth and instant success without commensurate work.

We call on all the Catholic faithful to fully participate in the celebration, both at the national, diocesan, and parish levels, in order to rediscover, beginning from the home, the place of prayer, faith-sharing and concrete living of the faith. The Laity are increasingly called, by their holiness of life, to imbue the socio-economic and political sectors with the Gospel. Pope Benedict XVI has in this vein challenged them to move beyond being mere “collaborators” with the clergy to be truly “co-responsible” for the being and activity of the Church.

We have scheduled as a nation to celebrate the 2nd National Pastoral and 4th Eucharistic Congresses in Abuja, November 12-18, 2012, as part of our celebration of the Year of Faith.

Once again, we urge all Nigerians to continue to work and to pray. May we resume our national **Prayer against Bribery and Corruption**, embracing the promise of our God to restore our Land if and when we turn to him in repentance (cf. Isaiah 1:18). As we enter the month of October, may we intensify the praying of the Rosary for peace in Nigeria.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of our Saviour, be our model and intercessor, especially in this Year of Faith.

Most Rev. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama  
Archbishop of Jos  
*President*

Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins  
Archbishop of Lagos  
*Secretary*