



## **ANNIVERSARIES ARE SIGNS OF GRATITUDE TO GOD AND REMINDERS OF AN INEVITABLE END THROUGH DEATH**

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### **ADO-EKITI, NIGERIA -**

Anniversaries give us the opportunity to show gratitude to God for His love, goodness and compassion, as well as help us in retrospect about our life with a view of planning for a fruitful life after death in heaven. This remark was made by Rev. Benedict Bimbola Joseph, in his homily at the thanksgiving Mass to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday anniversary of Rev. Fr. Anthony Oluwole Ijasan, the President of the Association of Diocesan/Religious Directors of Communications.

According to the homilist, golden jubilee anniversary provides a good opportunity for recollection about the life of the celebrant, with a view of enhancing the preparation for a happier life in heaven at the end of the sojourn on earth.

The ceremony took place at St Fidelis Catholic Church, Ado-Ekiti, and was attended by the Catholic Bishop of Ekti Diocese, Most Rev. Felix Femi Ajakaye, many dignitaries, among who were priests, religious and lay faithful from different parts of the country.

Fr. Joseph used the occasion to remind the celebrant: "Anniversaries celebration, above the funfair that goes with it should remind you of the end that is inevitable and prepares you towards more graceful life beyond the celebrations."

Pointing out that birthday anniversary gives the opportunity to express gratitude to God, Fr. Joseph added that God's first gift to man at creation was life. He continued: "Nevertheless, being alive in Nigeria today is no more ordinary as it requires some special grace of God. Therefore, it is simply courteous to be grateful for any gift received, especially, one that comes from God. In fact, all that God desires from us is gratitude."

Noting that the situation in the entire world today calls for serious thought; Fr. Joseph declared: "Life is so dangerously exposed that it is almost uncertain that one would live for another day"; Been a Priest does not make any difference, in fact, it makes you more vulnerable to the dangers looming around. "One is not sure when, where, or how the terrorists will attack, he remarked" The homilist outlined the challenges facing the country which make life expectancy for an average Nigerian to be limited or reach the age of fifty.

Speaking on the life of the celebrant, Fr. Joseph declared: "Fr Ijasan Anthony has the ability to manage situations, especially, the worrisome situations that life present". The homilist continued: "What I want to say next is true and I mean it in all honesty. He also continued: "I have always wondered how it is possible for Fr Tony to sustain this value.

I have observed for long that in his “lowliness” Fr Tony feels more than comfortable among any group he chooses to relate with and most times he is found among the notables in the community, and even leads them in discussions and activities in many instances. He carries himself with an enviable sense of pride.”

In his statement of gratitude, the celebrant thanked the Catholic Bishop of Ekiti, Most Rev. Felix Femi Ajakaye, members of his family, fellow priests, Sisters of the St Michael the Archangel Congregation, the parishioners of St Fidelis Catholic Church; those who have accompanied him on his journey of life, particularly in his 25 years in the Lord’s vineyard as a priest; as well as all those who have come to celebrate the golden jubilee with him.