



BISHOPS MEET TO SUSTAIN THE EVANGELIZATION MISSION OF THE CHURCH AND FAITH OF THE PEOPLE

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ABEOKUTA, NIGERIA -

The Bishops of the Catholic Church in Nigeria gathered in Abeokuta recently as leaders and teachers of the people to address the challenges facing the people and the country which might also affect the evangelization apostolate of the Church in the country. This contention was made by the Catholic Bishop of Abeokuta Diocese, Most Rev. Peter Kayode Odetoyinbo, in his homily at the opening Mass for the second 2019 Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); held recently at the SS Peter Paul and Paul Cathedral, Abeokuta, Ogun State.

Bishop Odetoyinbo also noted that the gathering of the Bishops is expected to give the ray of hope to the people of the country in the context of the present "deplorable, religious, social, economic, Intellectual, moral, medical realities and situations which we have created and found ourselves in Nigeria." He therefore admonished his brother Bishops to continue to be the strength and hope of the people and encourage them to remain steadfast in the faith, especially in times of challenges.

Urging the Bishops to continue to speak and exhort Catholics and Nigerians as Teachers and Leaders, and as successors of the Apostles and using the recent admonishment of the Holy Father to the Bishops of Madagascar, during his pastoral visit to the country and some documents of the Church to buttress his point; Bishop Odetoyinbo regretted: “the loss of respect for lives, property, dignity of man, hence the suicide, assassinations, hatred, bitterness, anger, insensitivity, carelessness, recklessness on the part of our leaders in speech, in actions and thoughts, greed, salaries are not paid, the aged are neglected, kidnappings, insecurity” and note that these could be considered “as our own Xenophobic situations”.

While outlining the efforts of the Bishops at sanitizing the nation by speaking and advocating truth, justice and peace, through their communique, homilies, writings, spiritual and pastoral activities as well as making life worth living for the majority of the people, especially the needy through the Church’s social services delivery agencies and other activities at national, Archdiocesan and diocesan levels; Bishop Odetoyinbo urged the government and the people to listen to the voice of reason, as contained in several documents of the Church.

He declared: “Catholics must listen to the Bishops and commit themselves as co-responsible persons for the Gospel of Christ as it affects their personal lives and the realities around them. The Government must listen to the Bishops because they always have good news to offer them in all spheres of our lives – politics, religion, education, health, security social welfare of Nigerians and a host of others, since they too are actively involved in providing these social services for the children of God.”

In his address to the Bishops, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Antonio Guido Filipazzi expressed satisfaction at the rotation of the second Plenary of the Bishops Conferences among the dioceses noting: "This constitutes a sign of the fact the Church is one spiritual family which present in various parts of Nigeria, as well as in various parts of the entire world." He added: "From north to south. From west to east. Wherever there are Catholic communities, the Bishops may feel themselves at home and gather in order to pray, reflect, discuss and make decisions together."

While delivering the felicitations and blessings from the Holy Father Pope Francis, Archbishop Filipazzi noted that: "The Plenary Assembly of the Bishops' Conference is not merely a formal act nor a moment characterized by organizational matters, but it expresses that profound bond that unites the Bishops, Successors of the Apostles, and that must make them work together, not keeping in mind only the good of each one's own Dioceses, but also that of the dioceses of their brother Bishops, that of the entire Church in Nigeria and that of the whole Country, as well as the good of the universal Church."