



KNIGHTS OF ST JOHN INTERNATIONAL URGED TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES FACING THE ORDER

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ENUGU, NIGERIA -

Members of the Knights and Ladies of St John International (KSJI) have been called upon to address the challenges facing the Order to make it more vibrant in its vocation to the service of the Church and humanity in general.

The call was made by the Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), Very Rev. Fr. Ralph Madu while delivering a lecture at the 40th anniversary celebration of the association held recently at the Daughters of Divine Love Retreat and Conference Centre (DRACC), Emene, Enugu State.

In his 11-page thought provoking presentation, Fr. Madu, who is a Brigadier General and immediate past spiritual Director of the Order, went down memory lane giving the checkered history of the order from inception in 1976, its successes, goals and objectives as well as challenges which need to be addressed to make the Order more proactive in its spiritual and charity works in the service of the Church.

He also spoke on the significance of the celebration of 40 years anniversary as a prelude to the Golden jubilee anniversary of the Order. Using several biblical instances to buttress his point the CSN Secretary General noted: “This Ruby Anniversary known as 40th anniversary is a great landmark. The lecturer also outlined some of the successes achieved by the Order as national body and in the different Commanderies bringing succour and happiness to the people of God, especially the needy; and serving the Church invaluable in essential areas of her pastoral responsibilities.

However, as the order moves towards her golden jubilee anniversary, Fr. Madu noted the challenges that are not in the progressive interests of the Order, particularly at commandery level and urged that these should be addressed in the interest of the common good for all goal of the Order. Areas addressed by the lecturer in his presentation included: concise chronicle of KSJI Nigeria, unshakable faith, co-relation between faith and achievement, cohesive apostolate, charity, greatest theological virtue and preparation for a firm future.

Areas of concern identified by Fr. Madu included: need for standardization of the mode of recruitment into the order, “in such a way that all aspirants have the same length of formation; need for radical formation to propel proper management skills in some presiding officers, as lack of this leads to haphazard management which affects sustainability of projects; and need for proper meaning of leadership.

The lecturer also abhorred the formation of cliques, often along tribal lines, divide and rule syndrome and other related group formations that could be inimical to the invaluable role of the order in the Church and the society.

“SUBMISSION OF YOUTHS TO THE INFLUENCE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, A CHALLENGE FOR THE CHURCH”

The seeming submission of youths of the present day world to the influence of modern-day information technology has been described as a worrisome challenge for the evangelization apostolate of the Church in the country.

This assertion was made by the Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), Very Rev. Fr. Ralph Madu in his keynote address to participants at the recently concluded training workshop for Catholic youths from all the Archdioceses and dioceses of the Church in Nigeria. The theme of the programme was : *New Media Education for Catholic Youths*.

The training programme which was organized by *Signis Nigeria* with the support of Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS), took place at the Christ the King Cathedral Church, Aba, Imo State; and was attended by over 65 Youths from all the Ecclesiastical Provinces of the Church in the country. The Secretary General’s message was delivered by Rev. Fr. Chris Anyanwu, CSN Director of Social communications, who also represented the Bishop Chairman of the

director and Bishop of Nsukka Diocese, Most Rev. Godfrey Onah.

Speaking on the importance of the training programme for the youths who are integral part of the Church faithful, the CSN Secretary General remarked: "One of the challenges the Church is facing is the gradual "migration" of her youths to new era of information technology. Thus, our youths have replaced the word of God in their lives with the various viral technological expositions the digital world is offering them. These include unethical movies and other social vices which tend to counter the tenets and social teachings of the Church."

He added: "Thus, instead of going to the Church or in the silence of their hearts commune with God; most youths of today see their new sources of information technology, especially the social media as their source of "authentic information and guide" about life.

Fr. Madu therefore noted: "In the face of the challenges of the present day world, all hands must be on deck for the proper mobilization of the faithful to enable them counter these challenges. In this particular case, using all available means of communication technology of the digital era by the citizens of this era is of paramount importance."

While commending *Signis Nigeria* for organizing such an important programme for the church's citizens of the digital world, Fr. Madu also noted the importance of the media and the youths in the life of the Church and their

interconnectivity in the promotion of the evangelization mission of the Church.

Noting that the programme brings together two vital important arms of the Church, Fr. Madu stated: “The first is the bastion of the evangelization apostolate of the Church, not only in Nigeria but also in the continent of Africa (First synod of Bishops on Africa, 1983) and the whole world; and the youths who are the future of the country, nay the nation and the universe. Therefore, the invaluable importance of these two groups to the mission of the Church cannot be controverted.”

Earlier in his welcome address, the President of *Signis Nigeria*, Rev. Fr. Walter Ihejirika noted that the workshop will provide a lot of valid information, training and education on the New media and assured that the participants will benefit immensely from the programme. Papers presented at the workshop included: “*Youths, Fake News and Assessment of News Credibility in Social Media; Nigerian Youths in the Digital Age and Learning New Media Skills: Social and Moral Imperatives.*”

The programme started with an opening Mass at which the Administrator of the diocese, Very Rev. Fr. Innocent Ajuonu was the chief celebrant assisted by all the priests directors present at the ceremony while the homily was delivered by Rev. Fr. Steve-Mario Edward, in which he stressed the importance of humility as an important virtue to attract the blessings of God.

