



## **CARDINAL ONAIYEKAN ADMONISHES PRIESTS OF AHIARA DIOCESE TO COMPLY WITH THE POPE FRANCIS' DIRECTIVE**

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### **ABUJA, NIGERIA -**

The Apostolic Administrator of Ahiara Diocese and Archbishop of Abuja Archdiocese, John Cardinal Onaiyekan has called on the incardinated priests of the diocese of Ahiara Diocese to comply with the recent directive of the Holy Father Pope Francis, over of non-acceptance of the Bishop appointed for them.

The cardinal's admonition was contained in a Fraternal Message addressed to the priest of the diocese; in which Cardinal Onaiyekan called on the priests not to be "confused, misled or distracted" by some mischievous publications querying or even denying the authenticity of the document containing the verdict of the Pope.

His words: "I am aware that some mischievous publications are making the rounds querying or even denying the authenticity of the document carrying the papal verdict. If those behind such ideas are serious and honest, they ought to simply seek confirmation from the usual authentic and official news channels of the Holy See, open to everyone. I urge you all not to allow yourselves to be confused, misled and distracted by such publications."

He added: "I repeat what I said in my last message to you: 'There is no more time for playing any games or prevaricating'. The Pope has spoken. His words must be treated with utmost seriousness by anyone who considers himself a Catholic, and more especially, a Catholic Priests."

Believing that the one month of grace given by the Holy Father to the priests to comply with his directive is about midway through, Cardinal Onaiyekan outlined how the individual letter of apology by the priests can get to the Holy Father and said: "I have been praying fervently for all of you, with special remembrance at my daily Holy Masses, that the Holy Spirit of Truth may guide everyone to take the right decision on this very important matter.

It will be recalled that the Holy Father Pope Francis, after a recent meeting with representatives of priests and lay faithful of Ahiara diocese, in Rome, called on the faithful of the diocese to submit to the supremacy of the Holy Father and the Church and bring to an end the impasse going on in the diocese over the installation of their Bishop. He also issued an ultimatum to the priests and other consecrated persons of the diocese to prevent "an attempted taking of the vineyard of the Lord".

The holy Father continued: "Whoever was opposed to Bishop Okpaleke taking possession of the Diocese wants to destroy the Church. This is forbidden; perhaps he does not realize it, but the Church is suffering as well as the People of God within her. The Pope cannot be indifferent.'

Noting that the Church is a mother and cannot abandon her many children; the Pope emphasized that "whoever

offends her commits a mortal sin.” He added: “ I feel sorrow for those priests who are being manipulated even from abroad and from outside the Diocese.”

He therefore ordered every priest who is incardinated in the diocese, living or working in the diocese or elsewhere in the diaspora to write an individual, personal letter “to me in which he asks for forgiveness”.