



## **KNIGHTS OF ST JOHN INTERNATIONAL AND CWO ADMONISH FAITHFUL OF AHIARA DIOCESE**

Jul 19, 2017

### **AHIARA, NIGERIA -**

The Knights of St John International (KSJI) and the national office of the Catholic Women Organization (CWO) have reiterated the need for respect for the authority of the Holy Father, Pope Francis and expressed their solidarity with him on his decision of the crisis Ahiara Diocese. The position of the two organizations of the Church in Nigeria, was contained in statements issued recently.

Speaking after the Supreme Subordinate Board National Meeting of KSJI and their Ladies in Owerri, Anambra State, recently, the Supreme Subordinate President, Major General Anselm Okafor expressed concern about the situation of the Church in Ahiara Diocese, noting that it borders on “intransigence and disrespect to the Pope”.

According to him, “the Catholic Church has a rich and enviable history, devoid of ethnic and pre-modal considerations and therefore, the appointment of a Bishop is at the behest of the pope, and this is backed by Canon Law 377”.

While stating that the Knights of St John International condemn in its entirety the actions of the priests and lay faithful of the diocese over the appointment of Bishop Peter Okpaleke as the local ordinary of the diocese by the Holy Father, Supreme Subordinate President Okafor noted that the priests of the diocese should know better on matters concerning the appointment of a Bishop for a diocese and the supremacy of the decision of the Holy Father in this respect.

In the letter of solidarity addressed to the President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), Most Rev. Ignatius Kaigama, the National office of the Catholic Women Organization of Nigeria (CWO), the umbrella body for all Catholic women in the country; expressed their support for the action taken by the Holy Father, over the Ahiara issue.

The letter which was also copied to the Apostolic Administrator of Ahiara Diocese, John Cardinal Onaiyekan and the Metropolitan of Owerri Archdiocese, Most Rev. Anthony J.V. Obinna; reads: On behalf of the entire Catholic Women Organization of Nigeria, I write to Your Excellency, and through Your Excellency, the entire Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), to express our solidarity with the Holy Father, Pope Francis on the pronouncement in respect of Ahiara Diocese.

The letter concluded: We remain committed and obedient to the teachings of the Church's magisterium and shall

continue to pray for the faithful of Ahiara Diocese. The letter was signed by; Mrs. Nwanneka Cecilia Okolo and Mrs. Stella Ojadi, National President and National Secretary of the organization respectively.

Meanwhile, the July 9, deadline given by the Holy Father, Pope Francis to all priests and religious incardinated in Ahiara Diocese to write a letter of apology to him and accept Most Rev. Peter Okpaleke as the local ordinary of the diocese has expired. Reliable sources told Catholic News Service of Nigeria (**CNSNig**) that most of the priests of the diocese have complied with the directive of the Holy Father.