



## **BISHOPS URGED TO ACCOMPANY PRIESTS IN FACING SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL CHALLENGES**

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### **JALINGO, NIGERIA -**

The Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria, His Excellency, Archbishop Antonio Guido Filipazzi has reiterated the need for the strengthening of the spiritual paternity between the Bishops of the country and their priests in order to ensure the spiritual and pastoral sustainability and apostolate of the Church in the country.

Archbishop Filipazzi gave this admonition while addressing the Second 2017 Plenary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), held recently at St Charles Borromeo Pastoral Centre, Jalingo, Taraba State.

Making reference to recent Vatican documents on diocesan priestly association and the fatherly relation between the Bishops and their priests, the Apostolic Nuncio stressed the need for each bishop in the country to rediscover his “special spiritual paternity towards his priests”. Emphasising the need for the bishops to motivate and stand by their priests in times of challenges as pointed out by the document from Propaganda Fidei, Archbishop Filipazzi urged the bishops to accompany their priests in confronting their problems.

His words: “In order to face these problems, every Bishop should rediscover his ‘special spiritual paternity towards his priests’. The first component of such paternity is the ‘direct knowledge of his priests”. “Moreover”, the Nuncio continued: “it is necessary to encourage them in their difficulties, appreciate their qualities and correct their defects. In particular, ‘ the on-going formation of priests is one of the most significant ways to exercise that fatherhood”.

According to the Apostolic Nuncio, the Vatican document outlined the challenges confronting priests to include: “ the abandonments of the Priesthood, the spread of erroneous private doctrines, divisions among the clergy, the lack of respect and collaboration with the Bishop, the absence of the consideration toward the lay faithful, the scarcity of pastoral responsibility and the scandal of some.” He pointed out that these are negatively affecting the life and mission of the Church.

The Archbishop added: “a lot of the present and the future of the life and mission of the Church, also in Nigeria, depends on the effort of the Pastors towards the priests, who are sons, brothers and collaborators that need to be loved, watched over and helped to grow.”

The Apostolic Nuncio who was addressing the Bishops Conference for the first time, since arriving the country, expressed gratitude for the warm reception he has received for the Church in Nigeria, since his resumption of office and called for the support, collaboration and prayers of the Bishops and the faithful for the success of his mission in the country.