



## **REMAIN RESOLUTE IN FAITH TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES, Says Cardinal Onaiyekan**

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### **BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -**

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, John Cardinal Onaiyekan has stressed the importance of faith when asking for favours from God, noting that with the re-consecration of Nigeria to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at the grand finale of the National Marian Congress, the country will overcome all her present socio-economic, political, ethnic and religious challenges.

Cardinal Onaiyekan made these remarks in his homily at the closing Mass of the country's third National Marian Congress held recently at the grounds of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City, Edo State. The ceremony featured the celebration of the Mass, recitation of the Rosary, Candle light procession, praise worship and re-consecration of Nigeria to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It also marked the culmination of the country's celebration of the Jubilee Year to mark the Centenary of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal, declared by the Holy Father Pope Francis, from November 27th to November 26th 2017.

Present at the ceremony were: about 53 members of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria including John Cardinal Onaiyekan of Abuja and Anthony Cardinal Okogie, the emeritus Archbishop of Lagos and Archbishop Patrick Eboresi Ekpu, emeritus Archbishop of Benin City. Also in attendance were: the Charge de Affairs at the Apostolic

Nunciature Msgr Javier D Fernandes G, who represented the Papal Nuncio to Nigeria, Archbishop Antonio Guido Filippazi; about 800 priests, over 1,000 Rev Sisters and about forty thousand lay faithful from all the Archdioceses and dioceses in the country.

Noting that the closing Mass was to give gratitude to God for the success of the three-day Prayer Pilgrimage ceremony and the re-consecration of the Nigerian nation to the immaculate Heart of Mary; Cardinal Onaiyekan expressed optimism that the prayers of the people have been answered and the country will experience tremendous positive changes in all facets of life; to make life worth living for majority of Nigerians.

He however called on the pilgrims to remain steadfast in their faith as this is very paramount to the realization of all the graces and blessings that have been asked for the country, the Church, families and the entire people of the country. His words: "With deep faith God will bring the challenges of our country to an end. However, for this to be fully achieved, we must remain close to God and Mary after this ceremony."

Reiterating the admonition of Archbishop Valerian Okeke in his homily at the re-consecration of Nigeria to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mass, The cardinal declared: "We must carry Mother Mary home with us. This call is not just an aspiration but a reality. It has been a prayer session for us, for our country, the Church, communities, families and the world; and may God grant our prayers through the intercession of our Mother Mary."