



PRISON INMATES URGED TO EMBRACE REFORMATION IN INCACERATION

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ONITSHA, NIGERIA -

Nigerians in incarceration in prisons have been admonished to see their situation as an opportunity for sober reflection, prayer and reflection for reformation. The admonition was given by the Catholic Archbishop of Onitsha, Most Rev. Valerian Okeke in his homily at the celebration of the Mass to mark his 64th birthday celebrated with the inmates of Onitsha Prison, recently in Onitsha, Anambra State.

Archbishop Okeke used the occasion to call on the inmates to take advantage of the celebration of the Marian Year to move closer the Mother of Christ the Saviour, who is in a position to intercede for them and make their life better. The Archbishop also assured the inmates that the multi million Naira Skill Acquisition Centre he is building within the prisons will soon be completed and officially opened.

He urged them to take advantage of opportunities the centre will provide to improve their education acquire a skill that will help them live a better life while outside the prison on completion of their sentences. He also admonished Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese and the country in general to draw closer to Mother Mary during the Marian Year to attract miracles to their lives.

Speaking on the forthcoming gubernatorial election coming up in the state, Archbishop Okeke urged both the politicians and the people of the state to ensure a very peaceful and orderly election and avoid bloodshed, thuggery and other activities that could lead to destruction of life and properties and affect the development of the state.

Emphasizing that political office is for service and not a do or die affair, Archbishop Okeke urged the politicians in the state to comport themselves in an orderly man, ensure peace and tranquility before, during and after the elections and make Anambra an example of positive electioneering campaign and politics for other states in the country to emulate.

Commenting on the Archbishop's gesture, the Chaplain of the Prisons Rev Fr. Pius Nwankwo noted that Archbishop Okeke has contributed immensely towards the welfare of the inmates of the prison by providing water, food, drugs and other amenities for their upkeep. He described the building of the Skill Acquisition Centre as a commendable height of the Archbishop's charity for the inmates.

Dignitaries present at the ceremony included: the Governor Willie Obiano of Anambra State represented by his Chief of Staff, Professor Asike, the traditional ruler of Mbaukwu Chief Peter Anugwu, Prof Kate Omenugha, Ogbuefi Tony Nnacheta, Hon Edward Ibuzo and Barrister Damian Okolo, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate, Mr Oseloka Obaze, and Hon Dubem Obaze. Others were: Chief Mrs V. V. I. Okoye and Chief Gab Onwugbenu, the Director General of Catholic Women Organization (CWO), Onitsha Archdiocese, Lady Ngozi Nwanosike, Dame Beatrice Madueke, the Catholic Men Organization (CMO) President General, Hon Ifeanyi Nnajiaku and officials of the Onitsha Prisons.

The celebration of the Mass was followed by the presentation of food items and gifts worth several thousands of Naira to the inmates of the prison by the Archbishop and the presentation of cultural dances by the inmates.

Story by Sunny A. David