



ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH PROGRAMMES IS A RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY FAITHFUL

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ABUJA, NIGERIA -

Active participation in Church activities, spiritually and otherwise is the responsibility of every faithful as part of the Body of Christ – the Church. This was the kernel of the addresses of Rev. Fr. Moses Iyara OSA, while facilitating the two-day Retreat for the parishioners of St Gabriel’s Chaplaincy, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), Durumi, Abuja, recently. The retreat was to prepare the parishioners of the Chaplaincy for this year’s Harvest Thanksgiving celebration.

The retreat facilitator, who centred his admonitions on *Christ as the Vine and the faithful the branches*; and the *People as the temple of God*, reminded the parishioners that every Catholic, as a branch of the Vine – Jesus Christ takes his or her source of living from Christ the everlasting Vine who is the source of all we have and are. He stressed the need for every parishioner to support the Church project; each giving according to his or her ability.

Fr. Iyara described Christ as the centre of gravity of the Christian faith and our lives; stressing that as members of the Body of Christ – the Church, every faithful is expected to use his or her charism and vocation to contribute to the growth and evangelization apostolate of the Church. He emphasized that thanksgiving in the house of God is not a competition but collaboration, with each faithful giving according to his or ability.

According to him, being part of the Vine of Christ, each faithful is expected to play a significant role in the life of the Church by contributing effectively to the spiritual, pastoral and physical growth of the Church. In this respect, Fr. Iyara declared, every faithful is expected to reach out with the Good News of Christ “within our immediate community,” as well as participate actively in the activities of the Church in the parish we are domiciled. Emphasizing the importance of thanksgiving as a sign of gratitude to God, the retreat facilitator added that doing this during harvest indicates being in communion with God as a branch of the Vine – Jesus Christ.

The retreat facilitator noted that being the branch of the Vine, we are expected to positively use the spiritual nutrients we receive from the Vine to do the work of God by our exemplary living a Christian life in words and actions. He noted that the retreat was to prepare the faithful spiritually and pastorally for their active participation in the Chaplaincy's 2017 Harvest. He added that it is expected that every parishioner will actively participate in the Harvest of thanksgiving, giving according to "our ability without stressing ourselves."

He further noted that the what "what give to God must be from the bottom of our heart and with sincerity, in appreciation of what God has done for us individually and collectively as part of the Body of Christ – the Church. Fr. Iyara however, emphasized that the faithful should realize that whatever they give to God cannot suffice for all we have received from Him; "as he does not need anything from us or depend on us.

Using several passages from the Bible to buttress his point, Fr. Iyara also used the occasion to remind the faithful that; "our body as the temple of God must be spiritually cleansed; hence, we must endeavour to be spiritually fortified as good Catholics in and out of season. Fr. Iyara admonished the faithful to remain focused in their faith and live a life of holiness and commitment to the evangelization apostolate of the Church by prayer, thanksgiving and giving to help the mission of the Church.

While urging the parishioners to actively participate in the harvest ceremony, Fr. Iyara added that whatever is given during the harvest thanksgiving is for the work of God within and outside the particular church, and must be done with love and gratitude to God; "as this will play an important role in our lives, after our sojourn on earth".