



POSITIVE IMPACT OF CHURCH ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITY CANNOT BE CONTROVERTED - Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah

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ABUJA, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Church through her social teachings and Encyclicals of the Popes has continually facilitated a road map for the spiritual, pastoral, political, social and economic development of the people of the world for the common good, peace, justice, equity and stability of humanity.

This was the kernel of the presentation made by Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto Diocese, at the conference organized in Abuja recently, to mark the tenth anniversary of the Catholic Veritas University, Abuja. The conference which focused on Peace and National Development took place at Chelsea Hotel and was attended by dignitaries from all walks of life including members of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) and the academia.

Bishop Kukah who was one of the key speakers at the three-day programme spoke on Development Planning in Nigeria and expressed concern if Nigeria could be identified as a developing nation since her Independence considering the indices that qualify a country for such recognition. The bishop identifies the indices of development to include: health, security, sustainable development, human rights and rule of law pointing out that the country's records in this respect is abysmal failure.

He regretted that the country has over the years; “remained permanently on top of the league of most vile and corruption in the international reports of the world institutions measuring good governance and human survival such as the World bank, United Nations Development World Report, Transparency International, Mo Ibrahim Report and so on.”

The Local Ordinary of Sokoto Diocese stressed the need to look “beyond politics to a moral compass for guiding the politics of Africa”; pointing out the effective role of the Church in this perspective. His words: “The churches have their own problems and many might actually argue that they are part of the problem. However, for the purpose of our reflection, I want to focus on the Catholic Church and argue that perhaps, with some level of robustness, it could provide this moral compass drawing extensively from its rich history and culture.”

Bishop Kukah went down memory lane to identify the various documents of the Church, particularly encyclicals of different popes that have identified socio-economic justice in the world pointing out that; in their encyclicals starting from the time of Pope Pius XIII to the present Pope Francis; the Holy Fathers have identified the challenges of the world at a particular time and proffered solutions for them.

He stated that the crux of the teachings of the Church which has actually been the lamp post of the encyclicals of the popes is the redemptive vision and mission of Christ who said: “I have come to bring good news to the poor, freedom to captives and to announce the Lord’s year of salvation.” He continued: “Towards the end of His mission, He said His central message was that He had come so that we may have life and have it to the full; and before His ascension, he asked the Apostles to take this message to all the ends of the earth.”

Bishop Kukah, while pointing out that the teachings of the Church and observations of the popes, along the years in respect of the challenges of the world and the Nigerian nation are still prominent; outlined five areas that must be addressed to facilitate and ensure the realization of fruitful and beneficial development plans for the country and the

common good of all.