



## **CATHOLICS OF MAIDUGURI DIOCESE COMMENDED FOR FAITH THEIR STEADFASTNESS**

Nov 30, 2017

### **BORNO, NIGERIA -**

Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme, priests and entire faithful of Maiduguri Diocese have been commended for their steadfastness in the faith during the persecution and atrocities of the Boko Haram insurgency, which devastated the Northeast region of the country in the last eight years. This commendation was made by the Catholic Archbishop of Lagos Archdiocese, Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins in his homily at the Thanksgiving Mass to mark the golden jubilee anniversary of the diocese, held at St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral, Maiduguri, Borno State.

According to Archbishop Martins, "... the People of God of the Diocese of Maiduguri have stood steadfast, strong and proud to be Catholic. They have been steadfast in professing the Catholic faith and values in the midst of the suffering and deprivations that have come their way. We heard yesterday that as soon as the sound of gunshots go down and the dust from bomb blasts clear, the People of God make their way back to the church to worship and praise the Lord. That faith and commitment to Christ and his Church is what we gather to celebrate with you and give thanks to God for you.

While commending the faithful of the diocese for keeping the flame of faith burning in spite of the persecutions that they faced, the local ordinary of Lagos Archdiocese noted that Bishop Oliver Doeme became the shepherd of Maiduguri Diocese at the most difficult time of the life of the Church in the area. He however reminded the

congregation that, the Church has since inception, been persecuted but has remained persistent and stronger in Christ.

He declared: "My dear friends, troubles, trials and tribulations of all kinds have been the lot of Christians from the moment of the birth of Christianity. This been the pattern of things many times in the history of the Church. We know however, that the times of suffering have also been the times that the Church was strongest and most focussed on its life and mission. She may have been vulnerable in many ways at those times but those times have also been moments of grace when the faithful and their clergy were most dedicated and determined to keep the lamp of their faith alive and burning."

Archbishop Martins went down memory lane on the growth of the Church in Maiduguri since 1953 when it was created into an Apostolic Prefecture until the present time saying it has been a tremendous one that deserves that the faithful of the diocese should count their blessings one by one and give gratitude to God for his goodness and blessings. His words: "You give thanks not because all is rosy or because you have achieved all that you wish but just so that you can do the will of God which commands us that in all circumstances we must give thanks."

The Archbishop went on to remind the faithful and those of other dioceses that have experienced the Boko Haram carnage that they have been able to persevere by the grace of God, in spite of their persecution sufferings and tribulations. He remarked: "Of course, your ability to stand strong is because the grace of God has been abundant. The grace of God and your disposition to cooperate with the grace have been the secret behind your resilience. I know there must have been moments of doubt and worry and anxiety but the grace of God has seen you through. Your ability to trust and leave yourselves in the hands of God have been a source of grace for perseverance; knowing very well that it is only in submission to the will of God that we can find rest for our souls and assurance of a home with the saints and angels."

He added: "We encourage you, brothers and sisters, never to let go of your trust in God and your hope in Him. He

has over the years shown you His presence just as in history he has shown that those who trust in him are never left on their own. Strength and help from you-do-not-know-where will always be available to keep you going. Our Mother Mary: the Help of Christians, the Cause of our Joy, the Comforter of the Afflicted, the Health of the Sick, the Refuge of Sinners, the Queen of Peace, the Queen of the Apostles and the Queen of Nigeria has been your powerful intercessor in all the years. Be rest assured that She will not fail you but will always be by your side as a Local Church and as individual faithful in the Church.”

Other members of the Bishops’ Conference present at the ceremony included: John Cardinal Onaiyekan of Abuja; Archbishops: Ignatius Kaigama of Jos and CBCN President; Matthew Ndagoso of Kaduna; Augustine Akubeze of Benin City and Felix Alaba Job, Emeritus of Ibadan Archdiocese. Also in attendance were Bishops: George Dodo of Zaria; Martin Uzoukwu of Minna; Martin Olorunmolu of Lokoja; Anthony Adaji of Idah; John Niyiring of Kano, OSA; Charles Hammawa of Jalingo; Camilus Umoh of Ikot Ekpene; Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto; William Avenya of Gboko; Peter Adoboh of Katsina-Ala; Michael Gokum of Pankshin; Donatus Ogun of Uromi; Philip Dung of Shendam; Hilary Dachelem of Bauchi; Anselm Umoren, Auxiliary Bishop of Abuja; and Denis Iszoh, Auxiliary Bishop of Onitsha.

Also in attendance were: Bishops Bruno Ateba of Manouna-Mokolo Diocese of Cameroun and Henry Aruna, Auxiliary Bishop of Kenema, Sierra-Leone; Rev. Fr. Moses Ikpa who represented Bishop Michael Apochi of Otukpo; Rev. Fr. Valentine Eze who represented Bishop Calistus Onaga of Enugu; Rev. Fr. Jude Maigan who represented Bishop Matthew Audu of Lafia; Rev. Fr. John Abubakar, OSA Superior; Fr. Isa Saliyu of Kontagora Vicariate and Rev. Fr. Raymond Hickey OSA. The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), was represented by Rev. Fr. Ralph Madu, the Secretary General; Rev. Fr. Zacharia Samjumi, deputy Secretary General and Rev. Fr. Chris Anyanwu, Director of Social Communications.