



GOVERNMENT AGENCIES URGED TO COLLABORATE WITH THE CHURCH FOR SUCCESSFUL REHABILITATION OF THE NORTH EAST REGION

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MAIDUGURI, NIGERIA -

Government agencies saddled with the responsibility of rebuilding the Northeast region of the country, after the devastation of the Boko Haram insurgents, have been admonished to involve the Church in the implementation of the rehabilitation programme to ensure equity and justice in the region.

This admonition was given by the Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins in his homily at the Thanksgiving Mass to mark the golden jubilee anniversary of the Catholic diocese of Maiduguri, held recently at the St. Patrick's Cathedral, Maiduguri, Borno State. The ceremony was attended by a high powered delegation of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), led by its president, Most Rev. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, the Metropolitan of Jos Ecclesiastical Province.

Justifying the call for the collaboration Archbishop Martins stated: "The Church had been on ground and had been doing what government eventually set up a body to do. The Church has the structure and the integrity as well as the evidence of its efficiency in doing the work. It is only logical that anyone who truly wishes to rebuild the people and take care of the people should make use of the Churches presence on ground and her structures that have proved to be effective in carrying out the task."

He called on the government to do more to bring the insurgency to a final end. While noting that Military action against the insurgents has so far been wonderful Archbishop Martins commended the country's armed forces as well as the civilian collaborators for all their effort and sacrifices. He however, warned that boko haram is not dead yet.

Archbishop Martins therefore advocated dialogue to bring the insurgency to a final end. His words: "We know that as long as those who believe in its credo are still alive, attacks and even resurgence cannot be overruled. Hence, we must call on government to also find ways and means of engaging boko haram as a group as well as those who have surrendered themselves. The need to de-brief and get to the minds and hearts of those who have surrendered cannot be overemphasised in order to make them useful and fruitful citizens of our nation again."

He concluded: "Military action can only win a war; it cannot succeed in making enemies-at-war into friends. Only something else, some other action can do that. We hope that government and her agencies will pursue that line of action in order to bring the problem to a conclusion." Archbishop Martins commended the Bishop Oliver Doeme and all those who have been involved in the Church's rehabilitation programme for the way they have brought consolation and succour to the afflicted people without ethnic or religious prejudice.

Other members of the Bishops' Conference present at the ceremony included: John Cardinal Onaiyekan of Abuja; Archbishops: Matthew Ndagoso of Kaduna; Augustine Akubeze of Benin City and CBCN Vice President; 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.