



FAITHFUL OF BOMADI DIOCESE URGED TO BRACE UP FOR CHALLENGES

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BOMADI, NIGERIA -

The faithful of the newly erected Diocese of Bomadi have been admonished to brace up for the challenges ahead for the consolidation of their new ecclesiastical and canonical responsibilities. The advice was given by Most Rev. Augustine Akubeze, the Metropolitan of Benin City Ecclesiastical Province, of which the new diocese is a sufragan.

In his welcome address at the canonical erection of the new diocese and the installation of Most Rev. Hyacinth Egbebo *MSP* as its Chief Shepherd, Archbishop Akubeze expressed the gratitude of the new diocese and the entire ecclesiastical province to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Antonio Filippazi the missionary priests of St Patrick's Society and all those who have contributed immensely in making the canonical erection a reality. The ceremony was performed by the Apostolic Nuncio to

Nigeria, Most Rev. Antonio Guido Filipazzi.

Archbishop Akubeze, who spoke extensively on the significance of the canonical transformation of the former Vicariate to diocese and the installation of Most Rev. Hyacinth Egbebo as its first Bishop; told the faithful that the change in status “means that the diocese has to develop strategy to become more financially self- sustaining”. Noting that the time of dependence on foreign aid as of old will diminish; the Archbishop remarked: “You need to form the culture of establishing investments that can help sustain the work of evangelization that the diocese must continue to carry out”.

Archbishop Akubeze who appreciated the work of the St Patrick’s Missionary Society and the first Bishop of Bomadi Vicariate, late Most Rev. Joseph Egerega for their invaluable role towards the realization of the canonical erection, told the faithful of the diocese that Pope Francis has through the erection of the diocese determine that they can now be like every other people who have their own diocesan Bishop and can take care of themselves.

He concluded: “Do not be afraid of shouldering this responsibility because the Lord will accompany you and our Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom your diocese was consecrated for the first time during the Marian Year will intercede for you.

In his address of appreciation, the Chief Shepherd of the newly erected diocese, Bishop Hyacinth Oroko Egbebo expressed gratitude to all those who have made the journey to the landmark achievement a reality. He noted: “This unique opportunity of the elevation of our Vicariate to a Diocese has come when the feeling of expectation for this event was running low.”

He thanked the Holy Father Pope Francis, the St Patrick’s Missionary Society, all his brother Bishops for their financial and otherwise support, congregations and formation houses who have contributed in one way or the other to make the diocese what it is today. The Bishop also commended the faithful of the diocese for their perseverance and

commitment saying; “Many thanks to my dear faithful of this Diocese. Your unsung but very important contributions are basically the reason for the possibility of this elevation.”

The ceremony was attended by members of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, government functionaries and dignitaries from all walks of life from within and outside the country. The CBCN members present at the ceremony included: Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference and Archbishop of Jos; Archbishop Augustine Akubeze, Vice President of the Conference and Metropolitan of Benin City Ecclesiastical Province; Archbishops Anthony Obinna of Owerri and Matthew Ndagoso of Kaduna; and emeriti Archbishops Patrick Eboseli Ekpu of Benin City and Felix Alaba Job of Ibadan. Others were: Bishops Martin Uzuokwu of Minna; John Ayah of Uyo; Charles Hammawa of Jalingo; John Afareha of Warri; Michael Elue of Iselle-Uku; Gabriel Dunia of Auchi and Camillus Umoh of Ikot-Ekpene.

Also present were: Bishops Emmanuel Badejo of Oyo; Anthony Adaji *MSP* of Idah; Paulinus Ezeokafor of Awka; Augustine Ukwuoma of Orlu; Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto; Peter Okpaleke of Ahiara; Godfrey Onah of Nsukka; Donatus Ogun of Uromi;

Donatus Akpan of Ogoja; Anselm Umoren, Auxiliary of Abuja; Jonas Benson Okoye, Auxiliary of Awka and Denis Isizoh, Auxiliary of Onitsha. Bishops George Dodo of Zaria and Camillus Etokudoh of Port Harcourt were represented by Very Rev. Fr. Henry Atuma and Rev. Fr. Justin Njoku respectively.

The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) delegation, led by the Secretary General, Rev. Fr. Ralph Madu included: Rev. Fr. Ojaje Idoko, Director of Pastoral Affairs and Rev. Fr. Chris Anyanwu, Director of Social Communications. Also in attendance were: Msgr. Javier Fernandez, Counselor at the Apostolic Nunciature; Msgr. Thomas Greenan *SPS*, First Apostolic Administrator of Bomadi Vicariate; Fr. Kevin O'hara and Fr. Paul Hardy of St. Patrick's Missionary Society.