



MEDIA PRACTITIONERS URGED TO BE POSITIVE AGENTS OF MOBILIZATION

May 16, 2018

ILORIN, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Bishop of Ilorin Diocese, Most Rev. Ayo Maria Atoyebi has described truth as a vital ingredient for communication to make it beneficial for the common good of humanity. This assertion was the kernel of the message of the bishop to media practitioners, during the celebration of this year's World Communications Day, in Ilorin, capital of Kwara State.

The bishop, in his address titled: Truth Builds Society, Fake News Destroys: Be Herald of Peace noted that every human being has been given the gift of communication by God, and it is not an exclusive of media practitioners. His words: "In other words, we are all communicators – religious leaders and members, political leaders and citizens, and of course media practitioners. Thus, we all have the vocation of sharing all that is true, good and beautiful."

Bishop Atoyebi reflected extensively on the Holy Father's message titled: "The truth will set you free; Fake news and Journalism for Peace,"; expatiating on the danger of fake news; in search of truth in the midst of falsehood; the unique role of journalism as herald of peace and the need for Nigeria to arise, live by the truth and peace will reign.

The local ordinary of Ilorin Diocese stressed the importance of communication to all facets of life in the society, pointing out that truth is objective, illuminative and transparent. He therefore admonished media practitioners to be positive agents of social and political mobilization.

His words: “Journalists, media practitioners in Nigeria and around the world must embrace journalism for peace. This will greatly help in nation building and reign of peace. The majority that handle social media should spread the truth and not falsehood by verifying the sources of information received before sharing. This is important because fake news destroys.”

Bishop Atoyebi also called on political leaders to desist from propaganda, saying: “Enough of fake news, propaganda on national issues, truth and only the truth should be spread. Political office holders should use means of communication in communicating the truth and not organized-show of ghost projects”. The bishop also called on all arms of government to treat national issues with utmost care and respect for “the good of our citizens and humanity”.

Also reflecting on the Holy Father’s message, Rev. Fr. Gerard Musa of the Centre for the Study of African Culture and Communication (CESACC), Catholic Institute of West Africa (IWA); noted that “we live in a world where falsehood and fake news thrive”. Tracing the existence of fake news and falsehood to the time of Jesus Christ, who he noted was

also a victim of fake news, Fr. Musa pointed out: “The media organizations that are engaged in this practice fabricate lies, exaggerate news stories, promote dishonest reporting and construct misleading narratives.”

The CIWA lecturer, in the words of Pope Francis stressed the need of the spirit of truth in a world filled with lies and deceit. Using several biblical passages and other references to buttress his point, Fr. Musa concluded: “We all have to join in the battle against fake news and disinformation, knowing well that facts are sacred.”

He added: “We all have a sacred duty to promote whatever is good, true and beautiful. We are obliged to refute and rebut news that are fake and we must not share news that we are not sure of or any rumour that lack a credible source”. He stressed that the “greatest weapon with which to confront fake news is truth and time will tell the truth”; adding: “Experience has shown that time and truth are inseparable friends”.