



EMBRACE CONCEPT OF SERVICE FOR COMMON GOOD; NIGERIAN LEADERS TOLD

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IBADAN, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, John Cardinal Onaiyekan has advocated for a change of heart on the part of the country's political leaders and leaders of other stakeholder groups in the society by embracing the concept of service for the common good of all, instead of using their positions and power to lord it over the people and subject them to untold hardships and sufferings.

Cardinal Onaiyekan made this call in his homily at the celebration of the Mass to mark the 80th Birthday anniversary of Most Rev. Felix Alaba Job; the emeritus Archbishop of Ibadan Archdiocese. The ceremony took place recently at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Oke-Ado, Ibadan, Oyo State; and was attended by a powerful delegation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze of Benin City Archdiocese.

Also present were Monsignors, priests, Religious of different congregations, traditional rulers, Knights of the Church, representatives of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN, Oyo State Chapter); leaders of Christian Churches in the state, dignitaries from all walks of life and Catholic lay faithful from all parts of the South-west of the country.

Advocating a true change that will makes life worth living for the people and different from the Change mantra concept of the ruling All Progressives Party (APC), Cardinal Onaiyekan expressed concern for neglect of the aged by the Nigerian society and loss of traditional values in respect of concern for the elderly people, including the country's civil service pensioners.

Describing old age as a gift of God, Cardinal Onaiyekan noted that, those who are lucky to have the mercy of God and reach old age like the celebrant should be respected and cared for by the society. He added that the aged and elderly people of the country deserve better treatment, comfort, love and care in their old days; instead of the present abandonment they are experiencing from the society.

Going down memory lane on the life and times of the celebrant, Cardinal Onaiyekan stated that Archbishop Job has every reason to celebrate in gratitude to God for the gift of longevity of life in good health and comfort. He noted that the celebrant pursued his priestly vocation with passion, zeal and commitment and; in his seminary days was a pillar of support and embodiment of inspiration for his juniors.

He added that the celebrant was made a bishop at a critical time of evolution in the Church in Nigeria; and together with his fellow Bishops who took over the mantle of the leadership of the Church in the country, at a young age; worked assiduously to give the needed foundation and handed over a vibrant Church to their successors.

Cardinal Onaiyekan stated further that in spite of the challenges the Church has faced in the last 50 years, the "Catholic Episcopate has remained a stabilizing force for peace in the country". While congratulating the celebrant for attaining the age of 80 in good health of body and mind, Cardinal Onaiyekan thanked the Archbishop of Ibadan

Archdiocese, Most Rev. Gabriel 'Leke Abegunrin and the faithful of the Archdiocese for their support for the celebrant and urged them not to relent in this perspective.

Members of the Bishops' Conference present at the Thanksgiving Mass and celebration included: Anthony Cardinal Okogie, a bosom friend of the celebrant and Archbishop emeritus of Lagos Archdiocese; Archbishops: Alfred Adewale Martins of Lagos Archdiocese, Joseph Ekuwem of Calabar Archdiocese and Gabriel Abegunrin of Ibadan Archdiocese, the host Archbishop. Also present were Bishops: Albert Fasina of Ijebu-Ode; Ayo Maria Atoyebi OP, of Ilorin; Martin Uzoukwu of Minna; John Afareha of Warri; Martin Olorunmolu of Lokoja; Emmanuel Badejo of Oyo, John Niyiring OSA of Kano and Felix Ajakaye of Ekiti.

Also in attendance were Bishops: Jude Arogundade of Ondo; Stephen Dami Mamza of Yola; Bulus Dauwa Yohanna of Kontagora; Michael Gokum of Pankshin; Peter Odetoyinbo of Abeokuta; Donatus Ogun of Uromi; John Oyejola of Osogbo; Philip Dung of Shendam Hilary Dachelem of Bauchi.; Denis Isizoh, Auxiliary Bishop of Onitsha Archdiocese and Most Rev. Michael Fagun, emeritus Bishop of Ekiti Diocese.

The local ordinaries of Kaduna, Jos, Port Harcourt, Zaria, Uyo and the Eparchy of the Maronite Church in Nigeria sent representatives while the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) was represented by Rev. Fr. Ralph Madu, Secretary General and Rev. Fr. Joseph Offor, Director, Catholic National Service Centre. .