



RELIGIOUS LEADERS URGED TO SHUN SELF-AGGRANDISEMENT

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IBADAN, NIGERIA -

Religious leaders in the country have been called upon to read the signs of time, justifiably to lead the faithful to Christ and avoid self-aggrandizement. The call was made by the Archbishop emeritus of Ibadan, Archdiocese, Most Rev. Felix Alaba Job in his vote of thanks at the end of the celebration of the Thanksgiving Mass to mark his 80th Birthday anniversary; held recently at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Oke-Ado, Ibadan, Oyo State.

The Archbishop specifically addressing the leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) stated: "We should live the life of Christ and motivate the people to embrace the virtues of love and sanctity." He continued: "Our problems as Christians are not our Moslem brothers and sisters, but ourselves and among ourselves by seeking the kingdom of God without self-sacrifice and love, as directed by the Lord Jesus." The Archbishop therefore called on all Christians to be willing to take-up their cross and follow Christ.

While giving gratitude to God for giving him the opportunity to celebrate his 80th birthday in good health and successful service in the vineyard of God for the common good of humanity; Archbishop Job noted that ageing has difficulties and the way to reduce the sufferings of the elderly is to take care of them.

The celebrant thanked all those who have contributed to his journey in life, particularly the member of his family, his Episcopal brothers of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); and the faithful of the various places he has spent his spiritual life in the service of the Church.

Archbishop Job also used the occasion to call on the country's political leaders to see their election as call to service, and embrace the spirit of justice, love, peace and service; for the betterment of those who elected them. He urged Nigerians to use their electoral powers to elect patriotic people into political offices, in the forthcoming elections and not sell their votes to those who are not ready to serve the country. He also advocated for Independent candidates in the country's election process, so that people with integrity and fear of God can be empowered to serve the people.

In his goodwill message at the ceremony, the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); Most Rev. Augustine Akubeze of Benin City Archdiocese described Archbishop Felix Alaba Job as an embodiment of spiritual dignity and decorum and a shepherd who has dedicatedly served the Church and the people of God with all he has.

He noted that in his eight decades on earth, most of which have been in the service of the Church, Archbishop Job's dignity and decorum at celebrating the liturgy and other spiritual exercises are very mesmerizing. He described the celebrant as a de-tribalized man of God and formation expert who has left a good foundation for the Church in the Archdiocese of Ibadan and contributed immensely to the growth of the Church in Nigeria, in various positions as a member of the Bishops' Conference.

Noting that the 80th birthday celebration of the celebrant is a reward for his faithfulness to the work of Christ in His

Church; Archbishop Akubeze added that in conformity with the life style of the celebrant, “we must not stop learning until we get to heaven”.

The ceremony was attended by about 25 members of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); led by its President, Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze of Benin City Archdiocese. Also present were Monsignors, priests, Religious, 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.