



## **ARCHBISHOP KAIGAMA OUTLINES FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR TENSION BETWEEN MOSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS IN NIGERIA**

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### **MALTA -**

The uneasy relationship between the adherents of the two major religions in Nigeria has been attributed to what existed in the different roots of the two religions and unnecessary pursuits for increase in followership and faith superiority; among other factors.

This assertion was made by the Catholic Archbishop of Jos, Plateau State; Most Rev Ignatius Kaigama while delivering a paper on: The Challenges of Religious Freedom in Nigeria; as a guest speaker, recently at the Presidential Palace in Malta; to mark the launch of the 2018 Religious Freedom Report by the Church in Aid (CIN), an international Non-Government Church Organization (NGO), of the Catholic Church.

According to the Archbishop: "The uneasy relationship these two religions had elsewhere, before their arrival in Nigeria, has influenced the competitive spirit, inexplicable tension, suspicious and sometimes hostile relationship between the Christian and Muslim adherents. Ever since these two religions met in Nigeria, the struggle has often been for increased membership, territorial expansion or the use of religion to gain political capital."

He continued: "Unfortunately, this not-too-cordial-relationship has continued to grow in intensity with attendant negative consequences. Even many centuries after those bitter encounters between adherents of Islam and

Christianity, we in Nigeria continue to feel the hangover as attested to by the way the umbrella Muslim organization, Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) behave and act towards each other."

The Metropolitan of Jos Archdiocese added: "One can see from the actions and utterances of the leaders of these organizations that instead of focusing on how their religious values can complement each other to build their followers and by extension the nation spiritually and morally, they have been more concerned about promoting narrow religious interests, engaging in mutual verbal attacks and sometimes making inflammatory statements that threaten peace and harmony which is what sometimes gives the impression that the nation is at the brink of a religious war!"

Archbishop Kaigama, while going down memory lane on the advent of the two religions in Nigeria, also enumerated the incidences of massive destruction to lives and property this unnecessary rivalry has caused, including the havocs rendered by the activities of the Boko Haram Muslim insurgents and the Fulani Cattle herdsman, against Christian followers, and sometimes against believers of Islam.

Other reasons identified by Archbishop Kaigama include: the North - South Religious polarization dichotomy with the North mostly populated by Moslems and the South by Christians; and the divide and rule policy of the British, which favoured the north than the south; the advent of Christianity along with education which made the southerners to develop their capacity, knowledge and skills, without gender differentiation; compared with the Muslim Koranic or Arabic education; which, apart from spiritual empowerment, did very little to empower the youths, women and children.

The Archbishop also noted that the control of the political and socio-economic factors of the country by the three major tribes of Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba; against the wish of the minority groups, is another major concern.

Archbishop Kaigama outlined the several efforts of the Church in Nigeria, through her various agencies like Justice

Development and Peace Commission, The Catholic Caritas Foundation (CCFN), the Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre of the Jos Archdiocese and the Interfaith Youth Vocational Centre in Bokkos, Jos; to douse religious tension in the country and promote religious harmony through dialogue and practical activities.