



## **Priests and Religious as Principal Agents of the Catechetical Apostolate of the Church**

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### **ABUJA, NIGERIA -**

The important role of priests and religious as principal agents of the Catechetical apostolate of the Church in Nigeria cannot be controverted, the Catholic Bishop of Bauchi Diocese, Most Rev. Hilary Dachelem CMF, has declared. The bishop made this assertion in his paper at the recent first national Catechetical Summit of the Church in Nigeria, held at the CSN Resource Centre, Durumi, Abuja.

The theme of the summit was Revamping Catechetical Apostolate in Nigeria, and was attended by over 300 participants from all the Archdioceses and dioceses of the country, including some members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference

Speaking on the topic: "Priests and Religious called to be sound Agents of Catechesis - *Acerbo Nimis* 18-24", Bishop Dachelem declared: "This topic is timely because of the perilous times that we are in. The scourge of Pentecostalism (Newman, 2014), the exit of young people from the Church and high level of syncretism among our people (Peel, 1968) calls for sober reflection and concrete action. In fact, the theme of this summit: "Revamping the Catechetical Apostolate in Nigeria" exposes the fact that there are many missing links in terms of ensuring sound catechesis by pastoral agents.

The bishop continued: “Apparently, despite the seeming good in globalization, secularism and modernism (Falk, 2001), these phenomena have not been friendly to effective and efficient catechesis (Colpe, 1977) in the Nigerian Church. The apparent apathy and coldness of the faith in many of our dioceses as regards preaching and teaching the faith is worrisome.”

He further expressed concern that: “The indifference of many Priests and Religious, to whom the Word was entrusted at Ordination and Religious Professions is both shameful and painful (McConville, 1965). What is more, this is a great bane to the faith development of our people. Perhaps it is reason why Pope John Paul II maintained that “All believers have a right to catechesis; all pastors have the duty to provide” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, No. 64). In like manner, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* opines that “a means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction” (EV No.44).

Speaking on how to revamp the situation in the light of *Acerbo Nimis?*”; the speaker noted that it is crucial to remind priests and religious of their indispensable role as catechetical agents (Hoyos, 1998); stressing: “ This is why the paper proposes veritable ways of ensuring sound catechesis in the Nigerian Church. It is taken for granted that all agents of catechesis particularly participants at this summit have high interest in matters of the faith. Where the interest is low, it is believed that at the end of this summit, like St. Paul, our readiness to share the deposit of faith with others based on our call will increase exponentially.”

Bishop Dachelem went on to outline the different existing methods of catechesis in the Church and ways of revamping catechesis and the role of every segment of the Church in the exercise.

Bishop Dachelem concluded: “If progress is to be made in terms of reviving the catechetical life of the Church, all hands must be on deck to change the narrative. The most needed synergy required should form the basis of family

catechesis, parish catechesis and school catechesis. The division of labour requires parents and guardians, parish priests and other pastoral agents as well as teachers and educationists to do the needful.”