



LENTEN MESSAGE TO CATHOLICS AND ALL NIGERIANS: BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA

Mar 05, 2019

BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

5 March 2019

Call for Conversion of Hearts

We greet all Catholics, Christians, Muslims, and adherents of other Religions in Nigeria as we begin our Lenten Season for 2019. On behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, we salute Nigerians who came out for the Presidential and National Assembly Elections. We urge all registered voters to come out massively for the Gubernatorial and State Assembly elections coming up on 9 March 2019. All security agencies must remain non-partisan and must protect every Nigerian.

As we, Christians, begin the Lenten Season on Ash Wednesday, I call on all of us to be conscious of the three pillars of Lent; fasting, almsgiving and prayer. Let us all be involved in these spiritual exercises. Through fasting, we are able to conquer our concupiscence, and recognise that God has given us the power to overcome all temptations. Through almsgiving, we are able to share our resources with those who are in need. This act helps us to know that we belong

to one family of God. We must never allow political parties, ethnic differences, or religious differences to divide us. There is only One God who is responsible for our being. For every act of kindness done through almsgiving is done to Christ (Matthew 25:40). Through prayers, we come to realise our dependency on God. We cannot move forward if we do not turn to God in prayer. The prosperity of Nigerians is being held captive by corruption. Let us pray and work for the liberation of Nigeria so that every Nigerian can realise their God-given potentials. More importantly, that there should be justice and peace in Nigeria. Without justice and peace, there cannot be progress. Let us all be agents of justice and peace in our land.

Conversion of hearts is what Pope Francis calls for during his 2019 Lenten Message. We, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria also call for the conversion of hearts for every Nigerian. We must as the Holy Father said, turn away from the culture of dominating the weak. We must turn away from the culture of individualism. We must turn away from corruption and politics of bitterness. We must turn away from the rhetoric of hate speeches which create mutual suspicion among ourselves. Let us learn to love and trust one another. There is deficit of love in our nation. We, therefore, pray to God to help break our hardened hearts so that we can love the way God loves, and care for one another. May God bless Nigeria. Amen.

+Augustine O. Akubeze

Catholic Archbishop of Benin City and

President of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria

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