



LET US USE OUR GOD GIVEN GIFTS OF RELIGION AND ETHNICITY TO MAKE NIGERIA GREAT

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ABUJA, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, John Cardinal Onaiyekan has called on all Nigerians to collaborate to reverse “our God-given gifts of religion and ethnicity from curses to blessings” in order to make Nigeria better for the common good of all.

The Archbishop made the call in his reflection at the interdenominational Church Service held as part of the activities for the inauguration of President Muhammadu Buhari for his second term in office. The ceremony, which was attended by dignitaries from all walks of life, religious leaders and other invited guests took place at the National Christian Centre, Abuja on Sunday, May 26.

In the Reflection titled ***Let us Choose Life not Death***, the Cardinal hammered on the need to say the truth about the state of the nation, so as to facilitate collective responsibility in addressing the challenges facing the nation in all facets of life. Regretting that the gifts of ethnicity and religion from God have been turned into curses for the nation, the Abuja Catholic Church local ordinary noted that God has endowed us with adequate resources to make our country great but we have used them in the negative and turned them to curses.

His words: “Ethnicity and religion are two cases in point. Our ethnic diversity is God’s will and gift that we ought to

appreciate and celebrate. We should beware of those who seek to manipulate this in a game of divide and rule, for selfish interests." The Cardinal added: "In our emerging global world, we should be building on our long experience of living together across ethnic lines, if we are not to allow ourselves to be left behind in our fast developing modern world."

On the issue of religion, Cardinal Onaiyekan noted that Religion evokes strong emotion that ought to be deployed for solving the ills of the country instead of compounding them as is presently the situation. He regretted that presently, many are abandoning faith in God all over the world, "at great cost to humanity now and in the future". Noting that the challenge in this perspective cuts across religious differences and affiliations", the Cardinal urged that "we must all seek the will of God for good human relations."

He however warned: "Those who manipulate religion for their selfish political interest end up destroying religion and harming the nation. Our Constitution is not perfect. But its basic provisions about freedom of religion are valid and must be scrupulously respected by all, especially those who control state instruments of coercion. He therefore called for a drastic change of government system, if the country is to be saved from chaos, especially with regards to the issue of security and protection of life and property in all parts of the country."