



## **SUSTAIN THE UNIFYING UNIQUENESS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LAGOS; ARCHBISHOP MARTINS TOLD**

Jun 10, 2019

### **LAGOS, NIGERIA -**

The Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins, has been called upon to redouble his efforts at sustaining the uniqueness of the Catholic Church in Lagos as a rallying point for unity and harmony among the various communities living in the city.

This admonition was given by the emeritus Archbishop of Lagos, Anthony Cardinal Okogie, in his address at the Thanksgiving Mass to mark the 60th Birthday anniversary of Archbishop Martins, held at the Holly Cross Cathedral, in Lagos, recently. The celebration of the Mass was followed by a grand reception in honour of the celebrant at the City Hall, Lagos. Other activities included the unveiling of the Archbishop Martins Youth Development and Empowerment Foundation (AMYDF) and the presentation of two books written by the celebrant; *The Grace to Live* (compilation of his homilies) and *The Voice of A Shepherd*.

The ceremony was attended by John Cardinal Onaiyekan of Abuja and Anthony Cardinal Okogie, emeritus Archbishop of Lagos and including a high powered delegation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); led by its President, Archbishop Augustine Obiora Akubeze of Benin City Archdiocese.

Also in attendance leaders of other Christian denominations, traditional rulers, government functionaries, and other dignitaries from all walks of life. Priests and religious from different parts of the country, Knights of the Church, leaders of various societies and sodality groups and lay faithful of the Church were also in attendance.

Describing Archbishop Martins as a beacon of hope, Cardinal Okogie declared: "Your strides in social, educational, medical, spiritual and pastoral achievements remain testimonies of your great endeavours of spreading the Word of God with every available means."

Praying to God to renew the zeal and strength of the celebrant as he continues his apostolate, Cardinal Okogie reminded him of the uniqueness of the Church he leads. His words: " Your Grace, the Church you lead is unique. It is the Church in Nigeria's commercial capital, a Church in a city of immense political influence in Nigeria. This city will need your guidance. The Church you lead, dear Archbishop Martins, must make the values of the Gospel present in the commercial and political activities of this city."

He continued: "Lagos is Nigeria's melting pot. Virtually, every Nigerian ethnic community is represented among its inhabitants. We are all Lagosians in different ways. Lagos is our Mother in different degrees; for example, we are all

associated with Lagos and contribute towards making her what she is today, 'the Centre of Excellence'. Your Grace, this is the city in which you lead a Church, which in the words of the Second Vatican Council, is the "sign and instrument of communion with God, and of unity among men." Those words spell out the nature and mission of the Church.

The emeritus Archbishop continued: "The Church is a unifier. For this reason, the Church in Lagos must be at the service of unity and harmony among the various ethnic communities living in Lagos. It is therefore important that, as you mark this important milestone in your life, your ministry as Archbishop, represent a ministry of bringing the children of God together irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliation."

Going down memory lane on his relationship with the celebrant from his seminary days, Cardinal Okogie expressed satisfaction with his achievements so and prayed that God will continue to guard and guide him in his Episcopal ministry..ar commitment

Cardinal Okogie also used the occasion to remind Christians of the need to remain steadfast in the fight against corruption, tribalism, self-centeredness, kidnapping and many other vices noting that: " We as Christians would be contradicting our vocation" if we fail in this perspective.