



## **BISHOP ADVOCATES HARNESSING THE GIFT OF YOUTH FOR COMMON GOOD**

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### **AWKA, NIGERIA -**

Harnessing the gifts of youths can be very beneficial to the evangelization of the mission of the Church and the common good of humanity, if properly utilised, the Catholic Bishop of Osogbo Diocese, Most Rev. John Oyejola has asserted.

Bishop Oyejola who is the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) Youth Committee Chairman made this remark when delivering the keynote address at the four-day workshop seminar organized by the Youth Office of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN). The programme was part the Nigeria Church response to the outcome of the report of the 2018 Synod of Bishops on Youth, held in Rome; and the subsequent Apostolic Exhortation on the synod – *Christus Vivit*, by the Holy Father, Pope Francis.

The programme which took place at the Archbishop Obiefuna Retreat Centre, Awka, Anambra State, with *Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment* as its theme; was attended by delegates of all the youth group of the

Church in Nigeria, and presentations made of various related topics to the team by experts in different fields of human endeavour. Speakers at the programme included the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah whose paper was premised on *Thoughts on Catholic Youths participation in Nigerian Politics*.

Noting that the unique resources of the youth can help define their roles in creating a good future for the Church, the Bishop Chairman expressed the desire for the maximisation of this special gifts of the youth for the benefit of the Church and the common good. Bishop Oyejola contended that: "If well managed, the talents, enthusiasms and vigour of the youths can be veritable tools in the hands of the Church to achieve magnificent things for God."

He however pointed out that: "The problem most times is that the potential of young people in the Church are overlooked and dismissed on the grounds that they are impetuous, ignorant and unworthy of serious responsibility"; adding that if the youths are well guided, "God can use their impetuosity and "ignorance" to achieve great things."

The bishop stated further that what the Church presently needs is to learn new and better ways of journeying with young people, listening and reaching out to them, without being judgemental and empowering them to make positive contributions to the mission of the Church as well as in their lives. He added that they must be encouraged to embrace a life of holiness and hard work and make them effective agents in the spiritual and pastoral life of the Church, particularly as agents of evangelization among their peers.

While advocating the need for everybody involved in the Church to acknowledge the special gifts the youths possess and put to them to use, Bishop Oyejola who outlined the ten most challenges facing the present-day youths, urged them to be closer to God in prayer and take their faith seriously; be disciplined and be morally upright. His words: "A person without a sense of values will be worthless in the society. At this point in our national history, things are extremely difficult, you must not be tempted to give up until you overcome all the challenges in your path to greatness."

The bishop added: "As noted by a wise man: "You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself." To succeed in any noble venture you have to take 100% personal responsibility for everything you experience in life."