



POLITICS SHOULD BE A COMMUNAL SOLIDARITY SERVICE FOR COMMON GOOD

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AWKA, NIGERIA -

Politics has been described as a communal association for collaboration and service for initiation of programmes and activities that would facilitate development for the common good of the people.

This assertion was made by the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah in his paper titled: *Some Thoughts on Catholic Participation in Nigerian Politics*, presented at the National Youth Seminar, organized by the Youth Office of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), recently. It was held at the Archbishop Obiefuna Retreat Centre, Awka, Anambra State. The theme for the seminar was: *Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment*.

Noting that politics could be likened to going to church, which is a communion of community solidarity, Bishop Kukah however warned that, participation of Catholics, including youths, in active politics must be guided by the principles, norms and teachings of the Catholic Church. Using some passages in the Bible to highlight how and why Catholics

should be involved in politics, the Local Ordinary of Sokoto Diocese, explained the passage “giving unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar” (Mt. 22: 21); which many have erroneously assumed as a tacit directive from Christ for Catholics not to be involved in politics.

He said: “We have often fallen back on the encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees who demanded to know whether they are to pay taxes to Caesar or not as a reference for the involvement of Christians in politics. According to the story, the Pharisees confronted Jesus with questions of loyalty and allegiance to civil authority by the Pharisees. Was it right, they said, to pay tax to Caesar or not? In response, Jesus said to His listeners: *Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God* (Mt.22: 21).”

The Bishop continued: “The meaning of this text has preoccupied many scholars of Christian involvement in politics. However, years and years of misapplication have led many Christians or even non-Christians to assert that Jesus was telling Christians to stay off politics that belonged to Caesar and focus on spiritual matters that are of God. Yet on closer examination, nothing could be further from the truth.”

Giving a true perspective of the Biblical passage and combining it with story of the Good Samaritan Lk.10:25-37), the bishop noted the latter as “a story of a good Christian making the right decision on the highway”. He emphasized that: “for the Christian, politics should be seen as an offering to God who owns Caesar, his kingdom which, we ourselves are part of.” He added: “It is only natural that we participate otherwise, others will borrow our voices and come to decisions on our behalf.”

Bishop Kukah however outlined guidelines that are necessary for effective and successful participation of Catholic youths in politics noting among other things that politics is a vocation and a service in which participants must listen to the voice of God and the Church and embrace patience among other conditions.