



## CONFLICT AS AN EXISTENTIAL DIFFERENCE IN THE HUMAN PERSON

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### OWERRI, NIGERIA -

Rev. Fr. Ralph Madu, a former Secretary General at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria has attributed conflict to the existential difference in the human person, noting that it is a general belief that conflict is inherent to man's nature. He made the assertion in his lecture titled: Them and Us: Avoiding Conflicts and Working for Peace, delivered recently at the installation of Rotarian Ohajunwa Chukwuemeka as the 19th President of owerri Central District 9124 Nigeria, at the Immaculate Hotels, Owerri, Imo State.

According to him: "Conflicts take place at various levels ranging from the family to larger communities. There are national, international and world conflicts. Conflicts generate hatred, inflict pain and can lead to violence and wars. Conflicts destroy cultures, truncate civilizations, and disrupt social relationship and the entire production processes. (Francis Arinze, Religions for Peace, Doubleday Pub. NY 2007). Conflicts impede or rather stampede development. No wonder Pope Paul insists that development is a new name for peace."

He continued: "Generally, conflicts are capable of inestimable damages and they can last for a long period.

Oftentimes, the largest victims are not the immediate combatants. Conflicts can and do generate heavy collateral damages and in real war situations, individuals are treated as mere statistics and numbers. Once conflicts set in, the outcome often becomes open ended. Those sitting on the fence may also not be able to escape the loss of lives and investments and the destruction of livelihood that often result. The poor often become poorer and the rich may become poor as well. The profiteers are those who trade in instruments of conflict and beat the war drums. (Lai Olurode, "Nigeria the Need for Peaceful Co-existence", The Guardian, June 2003 p11)."

Speaking on the Nigerian situation as an example with many references, Fr. Madu declared that: "The Nigerian scenario is most pitiable. The fear of each other and the hatred between the Christians and the Muslims which represent the two major religions in the country are very palpable. Nigeria has become a killing field as a result of the growing social, ethnic and religious intolerance. No year passes without the eruption of severe conflicts within and between ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria, especially in the North."

The lecturer, however went on to commend the Rotary Club at both international and local levels for its commitment to the promotion of peace and peaceful co-existence among people of all races, providing for the poor and the needy and initiating people oriented community projects that promote development and communality. He outlined some of the people oriented programmes implemented by the association at international and local levels

He challenged Rotary Club Nigeria to be more visible in helping Nigeria to address her perennial challenges which

include: corruption noted as being the root cause of the poverty problem in the country; while peace is continually being threatened by “the pernicious and bellicose actions of the Boko Haram and the Fulani Herdsmen with people dying every day and the government seems helpless.”

He added: “A lot of militant groups are rising up every day from the various ethnic nationalities, some asking to secede from Nigeria and some asking for one right or the other. Kidnappings are going on every day and people are dying in their numbers as if we are at war. What will be the role of the Rotary International to help restore peace and tranquility in our nation?”

Noting that every Rotarian by virtue of the concept of the formation of the association is an agent of peace, Rev. Fr. Madu concluded his presentation by admonishing that: “Since peace is not just a job to be done nor can it be a finished product, but a divine gift requiring prayer and proper disposition for its reception, I challenge the members of the Rotary International today to embrace this mission to change the world with the Apostolic courage and eschew personal gains, you will definitely achieve greater goals. Our expectation is that the Rotary International will assist the Nigerian people to achieve the much-desired peace in our nation. This is your mission. May you carry it out with great apostolic zeal.”