



MISSION CONGRESS TO MAKE THE CHURCH MORE VIBRANT

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

The recently concluded Fourth Missionary Congress of the Church in Nigeria has been described as an impetus to make the missionary mandate of the Church in the country more vibrant as well as enhance the knowledge of the participants. This was the consensus of the over 350 participants who took part in the one week programme as contained in the communique issued at the end of the Congress, held at the Bishop Kelly Pastoral Centre, Benin City, Edo State.

The theme of the congress was: *Baptized and Sent; The Church of Christ in Nigeria on Mission*. It featured spiritual and pastoral activities; presentation of papers by experts on various aspects of mission; a special mission exhibition and the celebration of the concluding Mass at the Vivian Ogu Memorial Animation Centre, presided over by the Papal Delegate and President of the Pontifical Mission Societies at the Vatican, Archbishop Giampietro Dal Toso.

He was assisted by the Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria, Archbishop Antonio Guido Filipazzi, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze, CBCN President and the chief host; as well as all the bishops and over 100 priests present at the ceremony. The ceremony was also attended by the Governor of Edo State, Mr. Godwin Obaseki; his Deputy, Mr. Philip Shaibu, dignitaries from all walks of life and about 3,000 faithful of

the Archdiocese of Benin City.

In the communique, issued at the end of the Congress and respectively endorsed by; Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah, CBCN Episcopal Chairman for Mission and Dialogue; Rev. Fr. Joseph Nomwhange, Director, Mission and Dialogue, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), and the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies of Nigeria (PMS), who is also the Secretary, of the National Missionary Council of Nigeria (NMCN); the participants noted that among the missionary mandate of the Church is the proclamation of the Word and building ecclesial communities alongside the formation of the local clergy.

Noting that the congress was a time for sober reflection on the missionary mandate of the Church, the participants declared: "It gave us the opportunity to see how far we have come as a missionary Church, and give gratitude to God for the journey so far, especially in the last four years; secondly, it afforded us to see where we are today as baptized and sent; and called to renewal so as to be effective agents of evangelization; thirdly, it enabled us to pay attention to the different ways of proposing the Gospel to the world today. Moreover, it offered us the opportunity to pray together and shape our collective vision for the evangelization of our country and our responsibility to be part of the universal mission of the Church. Indeed, by Baptism, we are made members of Christ and His Church; together with the Eucharist and Confirmation, they make us living signs of Christ's peace and love."

Resolutions and recommendations adopted by the participants centered on: The Church is missionary by her nature and the universal Sacrament of Salvation; clarion call for active lay participation in mission in Nigeria; the youth as instrument of evangelization in Nigeria; the role of the media in Evangelization, opportunities and challenges; the effects of ecumenical movement and Religious diversity on the exercise of the missionary mandate of the Church in Nigeria; the challenges of contemporary mission in Nigeria today; the missionary significance of the heroic virtues of

Vivian Ogu to the Church in Nigeria and the missionary significance of the heroic virtues of Blessed Iwene Tansi to the Church in Nigeria.”

The participants concluded: “This Fourth National Mission Congress has empowered us to cast, without fear “our nets into the deep (Lk.5:4). We resolve to work in collaboration with each other and with all other stakeholders in the evangelization apostolate by our common Baptism for an effective testimony to our faith and to love as Jesus has always taught. We admonish priests, religious and lay faithful in all parts of the country to collaborate and work together in fulfilling our common responsibility to preach the Word of God (Mk 16:15), in Nigeria and everywhere.”

Speakers at the Congress included: Most Rev. Emmanuel Adetoyese Badejo, the Bishop of Oyo Diocese; whose paper centred on *the role of media on evangelization: opportunities and challenges*; Rev. Fr. Onyeka Amaegwu of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, Enugu State; whose paper was on: *the Church is missionary by her very nature* and Rev.Fr. Dr. Humphrey Anameje; whose presentation was on: *the role of the laity in the missionary enterprise in Nigeria*.

Other speakers were: Rev. Fr. Dr. Andrew Ovienloba who spoke on: *the contemporary challenges of mission in Nigeria today*; Professor Edward Erhagbe whose presentation was on: *the youth as instruments of evangelization in Nigeria*; Rev. Fr. Gregory Obanado, CBCN Dialogue Committee Secretary; who addressed the issue of: *the effects of the ecumenical movement and religious diversity on the exercise of the missionary mandate of the Church in Nigeria*; while Monsignor Emmanuel Nwosu and Rev. Fr. Stephen Dumbiri, Director Vivian Ogu Movement; spoke respectively on: *the missionary significance of the heroic virtues of Blessed Michael Iwene Tansi to the Church in Nigeria*; and *the missionary significance of the heroic virtues of Vivian Ogu to the Church in Nigeria*.