



CALL FOR RE-ARTICULATION OF THE INDENTITY OF THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA TO ENHANCE HER MISSIONARY MANDATE

Nov 08, 2019

BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

Participants at the Fourth National Mission Congress have advocated the re-articulation of the identity of the Church in Nigeria as a missionary Church to enable the faithful respond to the call to reach-out with the Good News of Christ as Baptized Catholics.

This was part of the recommendations of the participants at the Congress on the issue of the challenges of contemporary mission in Nigeria today. The one-week programme took place at the Bishop Kelly Pastoral Centre, Benin City, Edo State, with about 350 participants in attendance. The theme of the Congress was: *Baptized and Sent: the Church of Christ in Nigeria on Mission*.

Other resolutions of the participants on the topic which was one of the sub-themes of the congress were: "That the lay faithful should be properly formed in Sacred Scriptures and other Theological disciplines. The participants also stressed the need to "discern the changes in various cultural and social settings and their impact on Christian life; to undertake new responsibilities and generate new energies to joyously and convincingly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ".

On the issue of the missionary significance of the heroic virtues of Blessed Michael Iwene Tansi and young Vivian Ogu, of Benin City; the participants described the lives of the two Nigerian prospective Saints of the Universal Church, as worthy of emulation.

On Blessed Iwene Tansi, they called on all the faithful to embrace the life of simplicity, virtues and service, of the Nigerian monk and emulate his life of holiness as a practical way of reaching out with the Good News of Christ. They also urged that: "His exemplary life becomes an inspiration to Religious men and women to persevere in their vocations."

As for the life of Vivian Ogu, the young girl who stood her ground and opted for death to protect her virginity and Catholic virtues; when the armed men who attacked her wanted to rape her; the participants declared: "All Christ's faithful, especially the youths should follow the example of Vivian Ogu and live what they preach, even to the point of the highest sacrifice and that her martyrdom should inspire all to life of holiness and be promoted to serve as motivation to Christians and non-Christians."

The participants also discussed the issue of the Youth as Instrument of Evangelization. They noted that the youths as citizens of the digital world are vital to the mission of the Church in the present day world; especially among their peers. Pointing out that the youths must be more actively involved in the missionary work of the Church, they recommended that: "Youths should be given proper orientation in catechesis, empowered and grounded in capacity building, using modern technology and innovations;" and be involved in the Liturgy and other spiritual and pastoral aspects of the Church.

The communique issued at the end of the Congress was signed by Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah, CBCN Episcopal Chairman of Mission and Dialogue and Chairman, National Missionary Council of Nigeria (NMCN); organizers of the Congress; Rev. Fr. Joseph Nomwhange; CSN Director of Mission and Dialogue and Rev. Fr. George Ajana, National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies of Nigeria and National Secretary of NMCN. It was attended by about 30 Bishops along with Diocesan Priests, representatives of different Religious Congregations and members of the Laity from all the nine Ecclesiastical Provinces of the Church in the country.