



INCULTURATION INVALUABLE TO EVANGELIZATION; BUT NEED FOR CAUTION - Cardinal Onaiyekan

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

Inculturation is a veritable tool for the evangelization apostolate of the Church in Nigeria, but the process should be gradual, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, John Cardinal Onaiyekan has cautioned. The cardinal gave the caution in his contribution at the recently concluded fourth National Mission Congress, held at the Bishop Kelly Pastoral Centre, Benin City, Edo State.

The congress which was attended by about 350 participants, including the Cardinal, Archbishops, Priests, People of Consecrated life and lay faithful from all the nine Ecclesiastical Provinces of the Church in the country; had *Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ in Nigeria on Mission* as its theme.

Affirming the invaluable role of Inculturation in the evangelization apostolate of the universal Church, Cardinal Onaiyekan noted that in the case of Africa and Nigeria, there is need for more in-depth knowledge about the African Religion and culture by Church Theologians and the lay faithful. He stated that Church doctrine is the same from Rome to Nigeria and “there is the need for us to invest in what the Church teaches”.

The cardinal continued: “We should not belittle the knowledge of our illiterate villagers. Inculturation has been with the Church for long; Conflict between faith and culture has existed for long; there is therefore the need for caution

and we should not be too much in a hurry in “inculturating” the Church in the country.

Cardinal Onaiyekan further stated: “Anything stopping proper Inculturation in the Church in Nigeria is not from Rome but with us in Nigeria. What we do must not be incompatible with the Church; secondly, we must retain union with the universal Church. Thus, what we do must not contravene the teachings of the Church.” The Metropolitan of Abuja Archdiocese stressed the need to go deep into African cultures and songs, adding: “Traditional religion is monolistic-believe in one God”.

He therefore urged Church Theologians and the lay faithful to go deep into the faith of traditionalists and see the compatibility. “Know your faith and practice it. Don’t be too much in a hurry about Inculturation. It is a gradual process. Lay faithful must rise up to the situation. Nothing hidden in the Catholic Church. Everything is open; Cardinal Onaiyekan disclosed.

Speaking on the topic Contemporary Challenges of Mission in Nigeria, the speaker, Rev. Andrew Ovienloba noted that knowledge is the best way to be a true Catholic and stressed the need for change as Catholics, especially the lay faithful should be well-grounded in the faith.