



CBCN PRESIDENT OUTLINES CONDITION FOR MISSIONARY APOSTOLATE MANDATE

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

The President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), and the Archbishop of Benin City, Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze has stressed the need for all Catholics to be versed in the teachings of the Church in order to carry out efficiently and effectively their missionary mandate with the Good News of Christ.

Archbishop Akubeze made the assertion in his homily at the opening Mass for the Fourth National Mission Congress (NAMICON IV) held at St Paul's Cathedral Church, Airport Road, Benin City, Edo State. The theme for the Congress was: *Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ in Nigeria on Mission*; and it was attended by over 350 participants including Bishops, Priests People of Consecrated life and lay faithful from all the nine Ecclesiastical Provinces in the country.

In his homily titled: *Go into the World and Preach the Gospel to the Whole Creation (Mark 16:15)*; Archbishop Akubeze noted that preaching the Gospel is not optional for all the faithful, irrespective of their vocation but rather "very compulsory for every Christian". He however added: "But in order to carry out this directive or instruction, we have to know what we are going out to preach. The content of the Gospel must be well understood by the preacher. The Gospel must have permeated the life of the preacher before going out to preach. You cannot tell the people about the Good News if you are not familiar with the Good news"; which according to him; are contained in the

doctrine of the Church, the Creed, the Sacred Scripture and Sacred Traditions of the Church.

Noting that the Church is always on mission and every faithful a missionary by virtue of Baptism, the CBCN President however declared: “The proclamation of the Gospel entails a call to conversion of hearts. We the agents of the mission must first be truly converted so that we do not constitute obstacles to the message we are going to be preaching.

The Archbishop noted that the best way to preach the Gospel of Christ is by practical examples of virtuous life and eschewing all vices. In order to be positive agents of evangelization, the Archbishop urged the faithful to avoid “greasing the engine of corruption” by taking bribe; avoid being tribal or an ethnic bigot; avoid prejudice against people of other ethnic groups; avoid extra marital affairs, participate in or encourage exam malpractices.

Other vices outlined by the Archbishop included: “filling vacant positions in offices with people of the same tribe; as a result of our position in the office; admitting only people from one’s village only to a religious congregation; voting at elections on ethnic sentiments and not on merit; rejecting Church leaders appointed by legitimate authority, premised on ethnic or tribal inclination; and being visible agents of division in communities. The homilist therefore called for a serious retrospection and conversion of hearts in this perspective “if we want to become effective agents of the mission.”

The CBCN President also used the readings of the Mass to stress the need to walk in the ways of the Lord to put an end to enmity among humanity; noting: “When the message of Christ is truly accepted, there will not be war any more, in the family, in the community in the country and among nations of the world. He added: “Faith in Christ breaks down the walls of divisions between nations” The Archbishop outlined how to be agents of evangelization to include either by going on mission or supporting mission.

