



LAY FAITHFUL CHALLENGED ON THEIR ROLE IN CHURCH COMMUNICATION APOSTOLATE

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

The communication apostolate of the Church is a primary responsibility of the lay faithful, the Catholic Bishop of Oyo Diocese, Most Rev. Emmanuel Adetoyese Badejo, has asserted. The Bishop made this remark in his presentation titled: *The Role of the Media in Evangelization: Opportunities and Challenges*; at the Fourth National Mission Congress of the Church in Nigeria (NAMICON IV), held, recently 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*.

According to Bishop Badejo, who is also the President of the Pan African Episcopal Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS); "The lay faithful can fulfil their role in the mission of evangelization beginning with good participation in the organization of Family Prayers and Discipline, Neighborhood Preaching, Small Christian Communities, Church Societies, Christian Apostolates, Collaborative Ministries and Parish Projects.

While noting that reaching-out with the Good News of Christ connotes freedom of speech for Christ and a challenge for every Christian, the CEPACS President regretted that "... the reality of our day is that most baptized Catholics do very little evangelization, if at all." He continued: "Some even deliberately avoid occasions and events that might suggest such." The Bishop added: "The environment in which we live today even compels us to spread the Gospel if the voice of God, Jesus Christ and our Christian faith will not be totally obliterated in our time."

The Bishop commented on the scope of the media which is to project the message of evangelization beyond the confines of our habitual spaces, churches and religious institutions. He then went on to outline and speak extensively on the role of the media in evangelization and opportunities of the various means by which the message can be communicated. These include the traditional media; the everlasting printed word; Radio and Television as Resistant media; artists and artistes as dynamic media; the Liturgy as media for evangelization, Catholic bookshops and media outlets for evangelization resources; inventories as powerful media, Catholic Institutions as media for evangelization and digital media tools as inexhaustible opportunity.

On the issue of fake news, Bishop Badejo stated that “we cannot continue to sit on the fence leaving the work for the professionals alone. We must all be involved in one way or the other; accept change and be compatible with the changes in the world of modern means of communication”.

Speaking on the new media as the primary organ of reaching out to the youth, the Bishop declared: “New media offer almost unlimited reach to many today who do not go to Church, who cannot go to church and those who have left the Church. They offer an important facility for apostolate to those who cannot be reached by ordinary means, the homebound, the sick, the nomads, or the young people who are natives of the social media.” According to him, to conquer the new media, there is the need to align with the citizens of the digital world.