



PERSEVERANCE, ESSENTIAL VIRTUE FOR SUCCESSFUL PRIESTLY LIFE - Bishop Eluke

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BOMADI, NIGERIA -

Perseverance has been described as an essential virtue for a successful priestly life and those who have embraced the vocation have been urged to remain steadfast and shun earthly possessions which do not guarantee eternal happiness. This message was given by the Auxiliary Bishop of Port Harcourt Diocese, Most Rev. Patrick Eluke in his homily at the recent Silver Jubilee celebration of Very Rev. Fr. Joseph Opelema, the Vicar General of Bomadi Diocese.

Noting that call to the priesthood is a great responsibility, Bishop Eluke stated that those called to the vocation must persevere in the ministry by doing what God expects them to do. He admonished: "My dear brother priests, you have left everything to follow Christ. ... Do not let your heart be troubled, the master will say to you, he will bless you a hundred fold and that is why you are a happy priest today".

Urging priests to shun earthly possessions, Bishop Eluke continued: "happiness does not persist in possession; do not mind what you find around you, or the display of affluence by people around you but remain a happy priest and remain who you are" by embracing more the Blessed Sacrament and the Rosary

Bishop Eluke also used the occasion to appeal to the lay faithful to continue to support and pray for their priests because they have not accepted the call of God for themselves alone but for all the faithful. He added that both the

priests and the lay faithful play complimentary role to each other in the Church. Noting that earthly possession is vanity, Bishop Eluke urged all to focus on the everlasting life in heaven instead of concentrating on earthly possessions. He emphasized that priests should shun earthly possessions and not be bothered or tempted by affluence of the people that surround them.

Going down memory lane on the priestly life of the celebrant, Bishop Eluke remarked: "I have known you for 39 years, you are still a very happy priest, the happiness that comes from responsibility, commitment and prayer, sense of sacrifice and love. We are sure you love your vocation and God. While commending him for serving God, the Church and humanity meritoriously for the past 25 years, amidst moments of glories and difficulties the homilist reminded Fr. Opelema that the words of the day's Scripture are meant to encourage and set him on a new course for more missionary activities

He also reminded him that God has chosen him and that he has not chosen himself to embrace the vocation. His words: "God anointed you a priest to all nations and for the salvation of the universe, you have indeed touched many lives. You have brought Christ to so many people, those lives you have touched remain a source of joy and happiness to you. Jesus wants you to touch more lives ...

Speaking at the ceremony, the Bishop of Bomadi Diocese, Most Rev. Hyacinth Egbebo MSP, congratulated and commended the celebrant for serving God and the Church meritoriously, and also expressed gratitude to all who attended the ceremony, especially members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); in the state who have joined the faithful of the diocese to honour a worthy son and servant of Christ.