



## **DIVISIVE USE OF RELIGION PORTENDS DANGER FOR THE UNITY AND PEACE OF NIGERIA**

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### **SOKOTO, NIGERIA -**

The Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah has called for an end to the use of religion to provoke violence and disunity in the country, especially by those in government, adding that the various efforts at intimidating Christians is a divisive effort that portend danger to the country.

Bishop Kukah made the assertion in his Christmas/new year message titled: "As the Rainbow Recedes;" regretting that the country is really in troubled times "as the nation seemingly falls into the throes of binary rupture". The bishop therefore appealed for restraints in order to rescue the country from "gathering storms of frustration, self-doubt and despondency".

The local ordinary of Sokoto Diocese declared: "Ordinarily, for a nation so superfluously religious, you would think that our Democracy would have benefited from the values of our religions. Sadly, the new dispensation is pushing the nation back into the dark abyss of divisive, byzantine intrigues using religion." He continued: "Today, this government has dredged up religion and placed it right in the middle of its power calculus and the message is clear: to be with us, religion matters. Religious identity now trumps citizenship or even party loyalty. Politics should be a

glue for unity of our people and sharing of power and offices a lubricant for a sense of belonging. Sadly, all this is receding.”

Using the analogy of the reign of King Herod, who represented darkness at the time, the child Jesus the Light of the world was born to buttress his point Bishop Kukah further stated: “In response to the perceived threat to his kingdom, Herod’s gift to Jesus was death. Today, the Herods of our time still seek to destroy Christ and His followers. They have remained relentless even in our own country. They have employed the mechanisms of intimidation, blackmail, torture, imprisonment, exile and death in the pursuit of their outright hatred for the Gospel and its Messengers.”

He continued: “Christians must understand that ours is a life of witness to a higher divine power. Temporal power is important but we must place it in its proper context, appreciating its ephemeral nature. Christianity was never a religion of power, thrones, and majesty. ... The kingdoms of this world cannot prevail against that of God (Matt. 16:18).” Urging Nigerians not to relent in praying for the country, Bishop Kukah concluded that may God turn the hearts of the leaders of the country to true and honest service of the people; reminding them that: “The walls of Jericho fell by the trumpets of prayers not by armoured tanks (Joshua: 6:20).”