



NIGERIA, A NATION WALLING IN DARKNESS; SAYS ARCHBISHOP AKUBEZE

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ABUJA, NIGERIA -

The Nigerian nation is wallowing in the darkness of several challenges and these are hindering the spiritual and pastoral growth of the people as well as the socio-economic development of the country; the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) and Archbishop of Benin City, Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze has declared.

The Archbishop made the declaration in his address at the first Maranatha Praise Choral Festival organized by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria CSN, in celebration of the 2019 Christmas festival. The One-day programme featured many notable gospel singers from all over the country as well as choir groups from different Christian denominations based in Abuja.

According to the CBCN President: "In our land, so many people, both the political leaders, and the people are walking in darkness. We walk in the darkness of electoral malpractices; examination malpractices; budget padding; emblems of public funds; selective persecution of people; corruption in both private and public sectors." He continued: "Yes, even in the religious places, some leaders manipulate the people with the gospel of prosperity in an economy that is not growing. The people are asked to sow seed of faith with money and the seeds seem to be growing only in the lives of the preachers who are acquiring more expensive and luxurious cars and private jets."

The CBCN President added: “Many of our youths are walking in the darkness of addiction to drugs, addiction to pornography; addiction to ambition without means to achieve it. Many of them are walking in darkness in foreign lands with shattered dreams and visions and are too ashamed to come back home.” The local ordinary of Benin City Archdiocese used several passages in the Bible to buttress his assertion.

Using the opportunity to educate the people on the birth of Christ as the light of salvation that has illumined the world and delivered humanity from the power of tyranny and darkness as implied in King Herod; Archbishop Akubeze declared: “... we can see that in spite of the evil of human beings, God can bring his prophecy to fulfilment. The men and women who live in darkness have come to see a great Light. Christ is the Light that burns away evil. The evil in the hearts of some Nigerians would be burnt through the Light of Christ.”

While commending the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria for the laudable objectives of organizing the Maranatha Praise programme; which was intended to make Christianity more visible, foster ecumenical relations, rekindle hope in a better Nigeria and reach out to the poor through charity; Archbishop Akubeze emphasized that “The Church is a sacrament that mediate Christ to the world.

Present at the ceremony were: the Minister of Transport, Honourable Chibuike Amaechi, Mrs, Pauline Tallen, Minister of Women Affairs; Chief Mrs. Helen Mark, members of the Christian Association of Nigeria and leaders of other Christian denominations and over 7,000 people from all parts of Abuja and neighbouring towns.

Also speaking in the same vein, Rev. Fr. Professor Anthony Akinwale OP, reminded Christians in the country that the child Jesus was the light that came into the world to conquer darkness and other vices of humanity as represented in King Caesar Augustus, The Vice Chancellor of the Dominican University in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, made this clarification in his homily at the 2019 Christmas vigil Mass at St Christopher Catholic Church, Sango, Ibadan.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading of the day, Fr. Akinwale declared: Dictatorship is darkness. Darkness hides reality. The darkness of dictatorship hides the truth; and all these are attributes of Caesar Augustus who was the reigning Herod during the birth of Christ. He added that Caesar's own dictatorship hid the truth from him, especially in acknowledging that the Child Jesus is the universal king, the Light of the world whose birth brought the darkness of Caesar to an end.

His words: "The little child born in Bethlehem is the great light shining on the path of those living in darkness, in the darkness of dictatorship of Caesar, in the darkness of falsehood ... His birth marks the defeat of darkness." Describing Christ birth as God's offer of change for humanity; Professor Akinwale noted that no human being is worthy of adoration and the Caesar in each an everyone of us must be conquered.