



POLITICAL LEADERS, OTHERS URGED TO EMULATE CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

Leaders of the various stakeholder groups in the society have been admonished to reflect the image of Christ the Good Shepherd by building the trust of those they lead and serve the people selflessly. The admonition was given by Archbishop Augustine Obiora Akubeze, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) and Metropolitan of Benin City Ecclesiastical Province, in his homily at the celebration of the Mass for the fourth Sunday of Easter.

Speaking on the theme: Jesus the Good Shepherd Leads Us to Greener Pastures, at Assumption Catholic Church, Ute, Benin City; Archbishop Akubeze stated: "The sheep trusts the shepherd because he serves them selflessly. They trust him because he loves them unconditionally. They love him because he leads them to pasture and protects them."

He continued: "Hearing the voice of the Shepherd is essential. This is what we do when we take time to ponder the

word of God each day. After hearing and listening comes following. We make the free and courageous personal decision to follow the voice that we have heard. This decision often leads to occasions of suffering, but we do not let difficulties distract us or persecutions intimidate us. We have confidence that, no matter what happens; no one can ever snatch us from the care of our Shepherd. No one can separate us from the love of the Father, which comes to us through Jesus Christ our Lord (cf. Rom 8:39).”

Calling on the country’s political leaders and other leaders in the society to emulate the virtues of the Good Shepherd, Archbishop Akubeze declared that every leader must know that leadership is for service, adding that leaders who do not serve the people in their care are not qualified to be leaders. His words: “Leaders must identify the immediate needs of those whom they govern and work out effective ways to assuage their plights and hardships”. The Archbishop also noted that leaders will be able to do their jobs effectively when the followers cooperate with them and therefore on the people to pray for their leaders so that they can rule with humility and accountability.

The CBCN President used the occasion to remind the country’s leaders that: “There is hunger in the land. Many people are dying from lack of food and basic amenities. The hunger in the land is becoming more dangerous than the Corona Virus. This is not the time to take what belongs to the public for your personal use. This is the time for all leaders to take proactive and concrete measures to alleviate the plight of the poor.”

Archbishop Akubeze noted that as the Church also celebrates Vocation Sunday: “The entire Christian community

shares the responsibility of fostering vocations.” He therefore called on the faithful to pray for the holy Father, all Bishops, Priests, consecrated men and women as well as for increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. He also urged the faithful to observe this year’s May Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary more devotedly, in spite of the challenges of the Corona Virus global pandemic lockdown

He concluded: “As we celebrate this fourth Sunday of Easter, may we be reminded that we are all shepherds in our various rights; as parents, as teachers, as doctors as lawyers, as students. We are therefore called to care and love all those we come across daily. By so doing we will truly become shepherds after the heart of Jesus.”