



CATHOLICS ADVISED TO SEE CHRIST AS MODEL OF PRAYER AND SUFFERING

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA -

Catholics have been admonished to remain faithful in their faith and imbibe the virtues of Christ as their model of prayer and suffering. The admonition was given by the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); and Archbishop of Benin City, Most Rev. Augustine Akubeze, in his homily at the celebration of the Mass for the seventh Sunday of Easter and the 54th World Communications Day. The celebration took place at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, Benin City, Edo State.

Using the readings of the day to buttress his point, Archbishop Akubeze noted that suffering is part of Christian living, adding that joy and glory await the person who remains faithful to Christ, irrespective of the suffering or challenges we encounter as human beings. Speaking on the Coronavirus pandemic, the Archbishop assured: "Nothing lasts forever. Your present suffering will end. Our present challenges will come

to an end. The Covid-19 pandemic will come to an end. No matter what we go through at the moment, God is standing by us. He stands by us through our fears, questions and pains. So, in all things we must give Him thanks.”

Pointing out that the Gospel reading of the day emphasizes the power of prayer, the CBCN President remarked: “We become faithful in an unfaithful world when we work to defend the sanctity of life, when we work to heal divisions in our society, when we stand for what is fair, when we promote the work of the church, when we add to the life of the church, when we defend our faith and try to bring people into it, when we are concerned about the welfare of the poor and suffering, when we are concerned about morality in the media and in the world.”

Speaking further on Pope Francis World Communications Day message with the theme: *That you may tell your children and grandchildren (Exodus 10:2) Life becomes History*; Archbishop Akubeze noted that all faithful are communicators with the mission of reaching out with the Good News of the Gospel, using all modern means of communication at their disposal. Stressing the importance telling good stories the Archbishop stated that bad and untrue stories will do the society no good. He therefore admonished all Nigerians, especially Christians, to ensure that they are instruments of communicating good stories.

His words: “The Christian message is the Good News and the only story we should tell. Use the media to communicate the Good News of the Lord. Let us be heralds of God’s truth. We should not use our Facebook account, WhatsApp account, Twitter account, Email etc., to spread false information and bad stories. Instead we should use them to communicate the Joy of the Gospel. The Gospel is Good News, not because it does not contain suffering, but because suffering is not the whole story, but part of a bigger picture of salvation.”

He added: “The Holy Father notes in his message that in order to tell the true story, we must first know it. To know the true story, we need the Holy Spirit to remind us of the story Jesus told us about the Father and his Kingdom. It is the Holy Spirit that will help us rewrite our bad stories, transforming them into a masterpiece and an appendix to the Gospel story. It is only then that our own story will become a part of the great story of Jesus. This will then put us in a good stead to transmit this story to others. (cf. Message for World communications Day, 3, 4, 5).

Noting that the world is engrossed in an age where fake news and untrue stories spread like wildfire, because many people do not examine critically the information received from the social media, Archbishop Akubeze urged journalists and all media practitioners to learn to discern the truth and only publish after due verification. He added: “When you

journalists spread fake news, we as a society become so deformed and vulnerable.”