



STORIES OF POSITIVE LIVES OF HEROES PAST AND PRESENT COULD HELP TRANSFORM THE SOCIETY

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OYO STATE -

Well-articulated stories of heroes' past and present could be used as catalysts for societal transformation, the Catholic Bishop of Oyo Diocese, Most Rev. Emmanuel Badejo has advocated. The Bishop's position was contained in his presentation at the Webinar Discussion, held recently to celebrate the 70th Year of Radio Vatican Broadcast to Africa. The theme of the Virtual discussion was: *Story Telling as A Tool to Manage Racial and Social Tribulations in Africa.*

Speaking on the sub-topic: *Master Weavers of African Stories – promoting everyday heroes as solutions to African Challenges*; Bishop Badejo contended that the present challenges of crass materialism and other vices rampaging the African continent make it imperative for African stories weavers to use the virtues of the continent present days heroes to

ameliorate the challenges facing the society and transform the continent in all facets of life.

Using this year's World Communications Day message of the Holy Father to accentuate his call, Bishop Badejo declared: "It would seem to me that this is the challenge to which Weavers of African Stories are called today in the face of Crass materialism, Bad Governance, Terrorism, Ethnic Conflict, Corruption, Discrimination, Ethnic Bias, and Sexual immorality which assail the continent." He continued: "It is necessary to identify the real heroes of everyday as the message of the Holy Father calls us to do, and to expose their experience as a catalyst for change just as we do for our fathers in the faith, Saint John, James Agatha Cecilia and so on."

The went further to say that " It is imperative to deploy the stories and the local means of storytelling today that could bring the hearer or audience of any class or status to the point where King David after his encounter with Nathan, said: "I have sinned against Yahweh" (verse 13) and to the point where Jesus said to the lawyer in the parable of the Samaritan, "Go and do the same yourself" (V 37)." He added that there would be no reason for the weaver of African stories to feel shy doing this through myths and riddles and proverbs because to regard African myths as untrue or simply a distraction is merely a betrayal of ignorance about

their role and power.

He stressed the need for the identification of the positive stories of such African icons of selfless service, love, tolerance, fidelity forgiveness and reconciliation. Such icons as the Martyrs of Uganda, the much-acclaimed late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Blessed Fr. Iwene Tansi and even the teenager Leah Sharibu of Nigeria who refused to renounce her Christian faith to regain her freedom under the threat of death. These and similar stories offer us positive content around which we must weave our experiences, he said.

Noting that stories help humanity to establish meaning in life, the local ordinary of Oyo Diocese declared: "I make bold to say that after God, humanity is the element that is common to Christian and African traditions. Human beings have remained the same over the ages and have been at the heart of the ideals of Christianity and the values of African tradition."

He added: "Stories help human beings to establish meaning in life and to search for the Sublime Reality to themselves. Storytelling helps to express complex and difficult truths in a manner that makes them easy to appropriate but does not make them any less effective. They have been used in that manner in Africa over the ages. The Bible has examples of this

fact.”

Bishop Badejo concluded: “Without pretending, we must help our people to always see the larger story that with God, pain is not the end of any story. We must deploy the cultural and literary resources of Africa to ensure that when writing the story of our life and continent we do not allow anyone else to hold the pen. We must weave a fabric that at the end of the day ensures that our authentic life become authentic history that can match the history of any other people all over the world.”

Declaring the Virtual Conference open, the Prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Communications, Dr Paolo Ruffini assured African Catholic Communicators of the support of the Holy See in their apostolate. He reminded the online forum that, in many aspects, communication was double-edged, as it could be used as a means of building a better world or a mechanism for inciting misunderstandings, resentments, and even enmity. He also informed that plans are on for the establishment of a Vatican News Agency; and expressed optimism that Catholic communicators will take advantage of the service and collaborate to make the agency a success.

Other speakers at the conference were: Jesuit Priest, Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ; Mother Mary Claude Oguh of Nigeria; Ms. Sheila Pires of South

Africa and Fr. Prof. Walter Ihejirika, President of SIGNIS Africa. The Webinar was jointly organized by the English Africa Service of Vatican Radio and SIGNIS Africa.