



WITNESSING TO CHRIST BY PRIESTS NOT LIMITED TO PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD

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ABUJA -

Witnessing to Christ by the anointed is more than preaching the Word of God and celebrating the Sacrament, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Most Rev. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama has declared. The Archbishop made the assertion in his homily at the ordination ceremony of seven new priests for the Archdiocese, held recently, at the Our Lady Queen of Nigeria Pro-Cathedral, Area 3, Garki, Abuja.

Outlining the virtues of an ideal Catholic Priest, Archbishop Kaigama declared: “The new priests we ordain today other than preaching the word and celebrating the sacraments are called, according to Isaiah 61:1-3, to heal the broken-hearted, to serve the poor, to bring relief to those who mourn, captives, widows, orphans, the sick and prisoners who are often neglected by society. John 20:21-23 invites them to be instruments of peace

and forgiveness, while 1 Peter 5:2 urges them to shepherd the flock of God that is entrusted to them, not looking for a reward but with a generous heart and to always be an example to the flock. "Smell like the sheep", says Pope Francis."

While urging the newly ordained priests to live up to the expectations of their apostolate, the Archbishop added: "By accepting ordination, they have opted to be very close friends of Jesus and to make more friends for Jesus. Prayer will be the secret of their success as it is the oxygen for priestly ministry. When a priest stops praying or prays without proper interior stillness, he suffers "spiritual asphyxiation."

Archbishop Kaigama used the readings of the day to buttress his point stressing that priests are to be servants of the people and must be ready to serve and suffer for them; "depending upon God's providence through their hosting communities."

The local ordinary of Abuja stated that in the present - day world people are in search of

witnessing priests not necessarily eloquent priests with all sorts of degrees. He added that Pope Francis in his address to the Third World-wide Priests' Retreat at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Rome, Italy, June 12, 2015, said God's people know how "to recognize immediately when a priest is in love with Jesus". The Archbishop stressed that what the Church needs today are priests with keen missionary sensitivity, who will be willing to serve in areas where there are no comforts of life and groom these until they become full-fledged parishes.

He called on the faithful of the Archdiocese to support the new priests to be in love with Jesus and to be witnesses rather than mere teachers or preachers. He added: "Talk to our Mother Mary about us your priests. Always ask God to strengthen the faith of your priests. Report us to Jesus when we err and invoke the Holy Spirit to show us the right path. Together, we shall succeed in the name of Jesus."

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