



## **ARCHBISHOP MARTINS CALLS FOR RETURN TO THE OLD FEDERATION STRUCTURE**

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### **LAGOS STATE -**

The Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins has advocated the return of the country to her original concept as a Federation that recognizes the uniqueness of the federating units with rights of self-governance while the country remains united in diversity.

The Archbishop made the call in his message on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the country's Independence, held Thursday, October 1. The statement signed on behalf of the Archbishop by the Archdiocesan Director of Social Communications, Rev. Fr. Anthony Godonu also noted that the year of the country's Diamond Jubilee has been the most challenging for all Nigerians.

Speaking on the state of the country since becoming a sovereign nation, Archbishop Martins noted that “not enough has been done in practical terms by successive leadership to foster a deep sense of patriotism and oneness amongst the various nationalities that make up the country”. He noted that it was shameful that 60 years after gaining independence from the British, the country was yet to get its acts together; stressing: “we still lack the quality leadership needed to guide the country in the path of peaceful coexistence, economic prosperity and security of life and property.”

Archbishop Martins advocated that the Diamond Jubilee year should be used to reflect soberly on the reality of the existence of Nigeria as a country, under its present structure, pointing out that “A cursory reflection shows that we are far below where we ought to be if we take into consideration the human and natural resources with which the country is blessed”. He stated that the structure of the country that was distorted with the advent of the military into governance has remained an obstacle to the growth of the nation. “

Selfishness and lack of regard for common good that covers all the different nationalities that make up our country has made it impossible for us to be the Federal Republic that we were meant to be at independence, he declared. Archbishop Martins emphasized that the current structure, as many have rightly pointed out, has given too much power to the centre while the states and local governments have been reduced to appendages that go cap in hand to Abuja to seek for their survival from the Federal Government. “We must return to a true federalism in order to become the nation that we want to be,” he said.

Archbishop Martins attributed the existence of Nigeria as an Independent nation in the past 60 years to the grace of God and resilience of the Nigerian people who have persevered under successive bad leadership, motivated by selfishness and conversion of the nation’s wealth to personal use.

His words: “We thank God that we are alive to mark the Diamond Jubilee of our country’s independence. We are an independent country still searching for how to become a nation where no one is oppressed, and everyone feels a sense of belonging. In spite of all

odds we have survived for 60 years and so we must thank God and praise the resilience of Nigerians. However, this year of our Diamond Jubilee has turned out to be one of the most challenging for most Nigerians.

Making reference to the challenges faced by the country in the year, Archbishop Martins noted that the country was still battling with the effects of insecurities in the land when COVID-19 struck and made life impossible for those who lost their jobs and sources of livelihood. He continued: “To make life even more impossible, there was an increase in the rate of VAT only to be followed by the imposition of stamp duty on house rent and Certificates of Occupancy. The dust raised by that had hardly settled when we were slapped with an increase in electricity tariffs which was followed a couple of weeks later by an increase in the pump price of petrol.” The Archbishop remarked that life was becoming harder and harder for majority of Nigerians and government needs to take radical steps to ease the burdens on the people.