



## **CARDINAL OKOGIE DESCRIBES 1999 CONSTITUTION AS NIGERIA'S ALBATROS**

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### **LAGOS STATE -**

The Archbishop Emeritus of Lagos Archdiocese, Anthony Cardinal Okogie has described the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as an Albatros that has negatively impacted on the life of the country, pointing out that the document has made political elites beneficiaries of the country's wealth, while majority of Nigerians are deprived of justice and made to continue to wallow in poverty. The Cardinal made this observation in his message on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the country's Independence, titled: *A change of Heart for Nigeria's 60<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary*.

Calling for a total overhaul of the situation, the Archbishop emeritus of Lagos Archdiocese remarked that "a document that ought to facilitate and protect our land and our well-being, sets up Nigeria in a way that facilitates insecurity, poverty and

insurgency.”

Cardinal Okogie outlined four fundamental issues that should be addressed, to make the country a virile and great independent nation. These include: the need to rescue the country from selfishness; falsehood; the 1999 Constitution; and the need to rescue her from those who manipulate ethnic, religious and regional differences to attain and remain in power. The cardinal pointed out that Nigerians have a common enemy in a political class that sets one community against another. He added; “We have poverty because the Nigerian has been impoverished by an oligarchy that has cornered the riches of our land. How else does one explain the fact that a few of us can afford to own property in foreign lands when some of us cannot afford to pay their transportation to the market or office?”

Stressing the need for the country’s Constitution to be overhauled, the cardinal declared: “Nigeria needs to be rescued from the big, expensive and overbearing but uncaring government that has emerged as a result of this Constitution, from the kind of leadership that has emerged from the 1999 Constitution. Only the political elite can benefit from

this Constitution. The poor masses of Nigeria cannot. That is why the first line of resistance to restructuring is constituted by those who benefit from the Constitution.”

He added: “But it would be dangerous, if not already dangerous as we can see today, to leave this Constitution as it is. It can lead to violence. The injustice inherent in the Constitution cannot be redressed piecemeal. We need to be rescued from a Constitution that has set up the most expensive government on the African continent. With a big and expensive government, little is left for the welfare of the Nigerian.”

Pointing out that the country is in dire need of redemption, Cardinal Okogie emphasized that the present leadership cannot lead the country to the promised land. His words: “It would be utterly dishonest and cruel to say Nigeria is in good condition! Nigeria is sick unto death. Yes, Nigeria has always been in difficulty. But that is no excuse for allowing the current state of affairs to remain. Things ought to be getting better, but getting worse.”

He added: “But Nigeria’s problems cannot be addressed by the kind of leadership we have at this point in time. You cannot fix a country by using propaganda. Neither can you facilitate development by criminalizing expression of dissenting opinions. We all thought we had said farewell to intolerance of opposition on May 29, 1999. But recent experiences show us that we were wrong.

Cardinal Okogie concluded: “If the Nigeria political leaders and the masses truly love this country and want to see a great, strong and prosperous Nigeria, we must all answer this important question – How long can Nigeria survive without embracing the right revolution we need?”

Speaking in the same vein, the emeritus Bishop of Oyo Diocese, Most Rev. Julius Adalakun, in his own anniversary message stated that: “After 60 years of ruling ourselves, we have not gone very far.” He outlined the nation’s problems to include; tribalism, religious bigotry, bad politics, corruption, selfishness and greed, among others.”

He contended: “Maybe you are one of those who think *Only God Can Save Nigeria*, but remember heaven helps those who help themselves. God has never come down

personally to govern any nation but He has given us all that we need to build up an enviable nation; fantastic human resources - among the best in the world; over generous natural resources. We should be grateful to God for this enviable resources and make intelligent use of them.”

While congratulating Nigerians on the Diamond Jubilee of the nation’s Independence, Bishop Adedokun stated: “What we need is a change of heart and attitude to things”. He continued: “Somebody had said: "Nigerians know the right thing to do but they choose to do the wrong thing". On this occasion of our Diamond Jubilee, you and I must resolve to have a change of heart. It is after we do that that we can rightly call on God to change our hearts to do the right thing.

