



## **ARCHBISHOP JATAU WAS FRONTLINE CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER, POLITICAL LIBERATOR IN NORTHERN NIGERIA - Cardinal Onaiyekan**

Jan 18, 2021

### **ABUJA, NIGERIA -**

The late Archbishop Emeritus of Kaduna, Most Rev. Dr. Peter Yariyok Jatau has been described as not only a frontline Catholic Church leader, but also a political liberator, who was a true and prominent member of his Baggiu nation of Southern Kaduna.

The Archbishop Emeritus of Abuja, John Cardinal Onaiyekan made the assertion during his homily at the funeral mass for the late Archbishop Jatau held at the Ahmadu Bello Stadium Kaduna, recently.

Cardinal Onaiyekan affirmed that the late Archbishop was no stranger to the socio-political journey and experiences of his people. “He succeeded in bringing together the best values of his two identities. He was able to apply the principles of his Catholic Social Doctrines to the struggles of his people for just emancipation and inclusion, with quiet but no less effective spirit of non-violent diplomacy. He has proved that in a

situation of long entrenched social dislocation and political inequality, it is always better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. This explains his massive investment in the rural development of not only his own tribesmen, but of all marginalized groups within his jurisdiction. The results and the fruits are there for all to see”, Cardinal Onaiyekan asserted.

The former Archbishop of Abuja also noted that when Archbishop Jatau assumed full control of the Archdiocese of Kaduna in 1975, there were only three indigenous priests, but as at the time of his retirement in 2008, Kaduna Archdiocese could boast of not less than 125 indigenous priests. “This is perhaps not considering the many, almost a hundred others, originally ordained for Kaduna, but now priests of the many new dioceses created out of Kaduna. Thus, this Archdiocese is now not only reasonably self-sufficient in local clergy, but has been sending missionaries out to help out within and beyond Nigeria.

“After his canonically determined retirement from active episcopal ministry in 2008, Archbishop Jatau must have spent some quiet time during his almost twelve years of retirement thinking back and looking around at his many years of struggles for justice, development and peace in our nation. My fear is that he must have found himself deeply saddened to see much of the gains of his struggles being rolled back by new agents of

social disintegration and political disorganization.

Cardinal Onaiyekan however warned that it is obvious that it is not yet uhuru, and the struggle has to continue, until we attain our divine destiny of a great, peaceful and prosperous nation. He declared: "In his heavenly rest, we owe him the duty to continue the struggle. His vivid example of deep faith and patience must not be lost on us left behind to continue his legacy. It was a faith that allowed him to see beyond and through the foibles of the human weakness of those who think they have the power to do whatever they like, a faith that gave him the confidence and trust that on the long run, the truth and the good will prevail".

The Cardinal continued: "Now that he has run his race, there is still a long way to go. The project Nigeria is still very much work in progress, or is it work in retrogression? It is hard not to agree with the many who are saying that in our nation, things are getting worse by the day. This is not to deny that there are indeed some people, lucky they, who have not had it so good. But even their prosperity gets lost in the wider and deeper sea of the misery that is engulfing the vast majority. Basic human needs, security of life and property, minimum level of peace and harmony in the land: these are not luxuries but the necessities of life that one should expect of any true government".

According to him; Pointing out what is not going well with the nation should be seen as

an act of patriotism which government should welcome and appreciate, not shouted down and demonized. His words: "In our present serious predicament, what is needed is to bring all hands on deck, so that we can together rescue our nation from sliding into avoidable chaos. By the nature of things, the responsibility for facilitating this joint action rests with those who have accepted the role of ruling us. We can only pray that those who should hear this simple advice will listen and take relevant actions.