



## **BISHOP ISIZOH CHALLENGES COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTORS TO SHOW COMMITMENT AND PASSION**

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The Catholic Directors for social communications in Nigeria have been charged by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) Chairman for Communications, Most Rev. Denis Chidi Isizoh, to show more commitment and passion in their task as Church communicators and to ensure that they seek every means available to develop themselves in order to be more efficient in their duty.

The Bishop gave the challenge in his keynote address at the 3-day media workshop in Abuja which lasted from June 14 to June 17, 2021 and was organized by the National Directorate of Social Communications, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), for the

Diocesan and Religious Directors of Communications of the Catholic Church in Nigeria.

Operating with the theme, "Empowering Directors for an Integrated and Effective Catholic Media Apostolate in Nigeria", the workshop was declared open in a colorful ceremony by the Archbishop of Abuja, Most Rev, Ignatius Ayau Kaigama who specifically challenged the Catholic communications directors to be voices of the Church, of the society and especially of the poor. "You know the voices on the social media are largely not authentic. So you must strive to convey naked truth to the society and practice unifying journalism. While the Bishops speak from the altars in the Church, you are the foot soldiers of the Church because you must go out to encounter the people and report their plight as it truly is."

Following in the same trend, the auxiliary Bishop of Onitsha Archdiocese told the workshop participants that the Catholic Church in Nigeria was in dire need of Directors who are selfless and passionate about their duty. "We need directors with passion to communicate effectively and correctly engage the media tools. While you must project the message of your bishops and of the Church, it is also imperative that you go to the villages and report the struggles and heroic activities of the poor people; they too must be given a space on the front pages of your Newspapers.

Moreover, the Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Very Rev. Fr.

Zachariah Nyantiso Samjumi welcomed all guests and participants to the event and to the Headquarters of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. He was supported by all the Directors and Secretaries of the various departments and units of the Secretariat who also took turns to explain the relevance of communications to the mission they handle in their respective offices.

From the three papers and two practical trainings of the workshop, the first paper was presented by Padre Mike Nsikak Umoh on the topic: "The Mind of the Church on Social Communications". In his paper Padre Mike took the participants through the various teachings of the Church on media beginning from the 1929 Encyclical, ***Divini illius magistri***, issued by Pope Pius XI, to all the various Papal messages on World Communications Day from 1967 to 2021. From the different documents he was able to highlight the many teachings of the Church on the need for her leaders and pastoral agents to embrace the media, own media tools, train pastoral agents, participate in matters and discourse concerning the media, and the need to engage media tools for the task of evangelisation. The other two papers were by Very Rev. Frs. Patrick Alumuku of Abuja Archdiocese and Martin Anusi of Awka Diocese. While Fr. Alumuku shared his experience on "The challenges of running a media office in the Catholic Church in Nigeria" and hammered on the need for Directors to be determined and persevering, the Director of Communications of Awka Diocese, Fr. Anusi, shared his experience on "The

prospects of a successful Catholic media office in Nigeria” where he challenged the Directors to try think out of the box in order to keep the office above waters.

In his address, the auxiliary Bishop of Abuja Archdiocese, Most Rev. Anselm Umoren, harped on the need for Directors to work together in order to unify the missionary effort of the Church. "In this age where fake news is easy to spread because a good number of persons are with Smartphone, Directors of Communications must find ways of being at the forefront of promoting positive roles. If the Church fails to set agenda for the media, the media will end up setting agenda for the Church, and that will likely not be for our good"

In the practical sessions, on the one hand, Fr. Paulinus Andiyene, the Assistant Director of Communications for Uyo Diocese showed the directors how to set up a basic low budget audio and video recording and editing studio, and also the different types of microphones and their uses. On the other hand, Mr. Godwin Onyekwere, an ICT guru, introduced the Directors to the new digital networking app created by the national communications office for the Catholic Church in Nigeria, though yet to be launched. Each Director was given access to ownership of their diocesan platform on the mega app which enabled them to create, share and manage information from their respective dioceses on the national media network grid.

Furthermore, the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS), Very Rev. Fr. Solomon Zaku, in his address to the Directors, canvassed for their collaborations and support of the work of PMS in Nigeria. He explained that the funds that are given to support the work of missions in the mission territories like Nigeria, of which communications apostolate benefits greatly, are sourced from the people's contributions on days like Mission Sunday. Therefore, Communications Directors have grave responsibility in ensuring the success of all PMS activities and collections in their dioceses and congregations.

Additionally, the National Director of Social Communications, Padre Mike Nsikak Umoh thanked the Communications Directors for the enormous sacrifices made to be present at the programme, and requested them to convey the respect and appreciation of the National Office to their respective Bishops and Superiors. He reminded the participants that the workshop is an aspect of the central vision around which all media efforts in the country must revolve: Developing an Integrated, Effective and Efficient Communications Structure for the Catholic Church in Nigeria (IEES project). In view of this, he urged all Directors to connect with the National Office and with one another in order to form a synergy, while they were also to seek ways to upgrade their communications and media skills. The new, visionary and hardworking Director stressed that communication is at the heart of evangelization of the gospel of Christ and a necessary part of all aspects of the

Church, and that there can be no Church without communication. As part of ways of improving their services and efficiency, he requested all Directors to secure a separate phone and line for the communications office rather than using their personal phone, and they are to encourage priests in charge of parishes and other institutions to do the same.

At the social night to mark the closing ceremony of the Workshop, the immediate past National Director of Communications, Rev. Fr. Dr. Chris Anyanwu was appreciated by the Directors for his years of service to the Church in Nigeria as the Director. In the same light, the Directors thanked Otunba Jide Vincent Fadugba-Pinheiro on his retirement from the national social communications office after 17 years of meritorious service.