



## **BE A PROPHET OF GOD, IMITATE JOHN THE BAPTIST, NUNCIO INSTRUCTS BISHOP AJANG**

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**LAFIA, NASARAWA -**

**By Josef Ishu**

The newly installed Catholic Bishop of Lafia Diocese, Most Rev. David Ajang has been instructed to be a Prophet of God, as well as keep his eyes fixed on the Lord and obey Him alone, even as he was advised to always look up to St. John the Baptist in word and deed.

This admonition was handed to Bishop Ajang by the Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria, Most Rev. Antonio Guido Filipazzi on Thursday, June 24 in his homily during the Episcopal Ordination and Installation of the former as Bishop of Lafia Diocese held at St. William's Cathedral, Lafia, the Nasarawa State capital.

The Papal Envoy to Nigeria noted that by the Installation of Bishop Ajang as the second

Bishop of Lafia Diocese, he has received the fullness of the priesthood and is configured to Christ to exercise the prophetic ministry in the Church and in the world. “Look up always to St. John the Baptists, to his examples in word and deed, and ask him to obtain for you from God the same integrity of life, the same humility, the same faithfulness, the same zeal, the same spirit of sacrifice, that he had. Be a prophet of God, of God alone, and therefore always keep your gaze fixed on Him and obey Him alone”, Papal Envoy advised Bishop Ajang.

Archbishop Filipazzi also noted that Bishop Ajang has received his ordination in the year especially dedicated to St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. “It seems to me, therefore, that our brother begins his journey as a Bishop in Lafia accompanied by these two great saints –John the Baptist and Joseph-, who give him example, teaching and help to be a shepherd according to the heart of Christ. In particular, they remind the new Bishop and all of us, shepherds and faithful, of the prophecy and paternity that every Bishop, but in some way also every baptized person, must exercise. The new Bishop must be in the midst of the people entrusted to him a prophet, who, like St. John the Baptist, calls to conversion and leads to the Lord Jesus.”

The Papal Nuncio noted with dismay that the word “Prophet” is often abused, misunderstood and manipulated today and commonly believed that being a prophet

means predicting the future.

He stated further that, some people consider the prophet to be a challenger of structures and power. “Even within the Church, prophecy has been and is used to refuse obedience to Shepherds, doctrines and norms of the Church herself. Too easily people attribute to themselves the title of a prophet, and above all those who boast of being such, often do not speak and act guided by the Holy Spirit of God, but by the spirit of the world and the spirit rebellious against God, the devil. The true prophet appears to us in the brilliant figure of St. John the Baptist”, Archbishop Filipazzi noted.

Bishop Ajang was ordained and installed on Feast of the Birthday of St. John the Baptist, a day the Papal Nuncio described as a cause for great joy, not only for his aging parents but joy to the whole world because ‘many will rejoice at his birth’ (Lk 1: 14). “WE too experience a great joy here today, even in the midst of so many difficulties, problems and suffering for us personally, for our families, for Nigeria, for the Church and for the whole world. Today the Diocese of Lafia rejoices, because she receives, as a gift from the Lord, her second Bishop, called to succeed Archbishop Matthew Ishaya Audu, who guided her through the first two decades of her existence.”