



DISTRUST, SUSPICION: CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN NIGERIA CALL FOR REORIENTATION OF CITIZENS

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LAGOS, NIGERIA -

By Josef Ishu

In the wake of so much distrust, suspicion and rejection in Nigeria today, the Catholic priests in the country have canvassed for reorientation of the citizens.

The clergymen, under the auspices of the Nigeria Catholic Diocesan Priests' Association (NCDPA) made the call at the end of their 33rd Annual General Meeting held at St. Leo's Catholic Church, Ikeja, Lagos from Oct. 25-29, 2021.

The Resolutions signed by NCDPA's National President and Secretary, Very Rev. Fr. Sylvester Onmoke and Rev. Fr. Francis Ikhianosime respectively, noted that

although there are many reasons for great admiration of the Nigerian character or person, there are, however, ample reasons to be apprehensive about the Nigerian person.

Part of the resolutions read, "Being a Nigerian today comes with a high cost which includes

distrust, suspicion and rejection in many quarters occasioned by the prevalence of high-powered corruption, religionized

nepotism, uninhibited banditry, police brutality, loss of hope in the Nigerian dream, and so on. These are causes of grave

worries."

The meeting had as its theme:

“The Foundational and Holistic Reorientation of the Nigerian Person: An Urgent Imperative for the Church and State”.

The Diocesan clergy noted further that the advent of COVID-19 with its attendant challenges has further heightened their worry, not just for the Nigerian

person, but also for the Church. "The reality of the COVID-19 pandemic among us has necessitated the re-examination

and revitalization of the Mission of the Church [that all men are called to belong to the new people of God (Lumen Gentium)].

"We note with great concern that, not only were Churches and places of worship locked down as part of the efforts

to contain the spread of the virus, the services of religious leaders as essential workers,

were also excluded. However, the

gathering of families and small Christian communities has reawakened the consciousness and fidelity of the Church to her roots (Acts 2:46) and traditions with the family as its smallest unit (FamiliarisConsortio #17).

The priests resolved to maintain their unalloyed loyalty to the Church, uphold their true priestly identity and untiringly promote the unique fraternity of the Catholic Priesthood.

"Without equivocation, we resolve that we will intensify our passion for

transforming lives through the Gospel, by feeding God's people with well-prepared homilies and catechetical instructions.

We resolve too to keep reorientating our people, especially the youths, through quality education, formally and informally,

in our ministry."

"Be that as it may, the state must assist the citizen in his or her effort to get a quality education. The state,

consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, is to fulfil this role, not by overbearing interventions in the education sector,

but by providing an enabling environment for synergy for the family, voluntary agencies like the church, and other religious communities, and the corporate world in the task of ensuring that the average Nigerian gains access to good and quality

education."

The NCDPA recommended that every Nigerian has a right to good education and should have unrestricted access to basic formal

education namely, Primary and Secondary education.

"That Church and State collaborate to bring about the holistic formation of the human person. This could be

achieved through the implementation of the aspects of our Curriculum that are meant to inculcate virtue in

learners. We also advocate that students have their preferred choices of subjects.

"Educationists in schools must be well equipped with sufficiently qualified and meaningfully remunerated

teachers for the task of forming the students.

It also said that parents as first and primary educators must live up to their responsibility in the formation of their children.

"Religious leaders must be innovative in their ministry with the appropriate use of the new media for

Evangelization. However, in the use of social media by all, caution, self-control, and moral discipline should

be taken into cognizance.

"All state institutions should stand up to their responsibilities of providing adequate security, making

appointments devoid of nepotism and sentiments, to promote authentic patriotism as enshrined in the

National anthem and the pledge," the resolutions stated.